

The Life of J. D. Åkerblad

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The Life of J. D. Åkerblad

Egyptian Decipherment and Orientalism
in Revolutionary Times

By

Fredrik Thomasson



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2013

Cover illustration: Åkerblad's drawing of his Ethiopic language teacher Giyorgis. It is movingly dedicated by Åkerblad: "My teacher and my beloved, priest Gäbrä Mämfäs Qaddus [Servant of the Holy Spirit] Giyorgis . . . teacher and instructor of the Geez and Amhara language[s]." Figure 59 and plate 34. N72, KB.

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	vii
List of Abbreviations	ix
List of Plates, Figures, and Tables	xi
Colour Plates	following xvi
Introduction	1

PART ONE

THE MAKING OF A DIPLOMAT AND ORIENTALIST

1. Family and Education	19
2. Constantinople—City of Rumours	24
3. Diplomacy and Intrigue	44
4. Travel in the East	62
5. War in Egypt	80
6. Mixing East and West	90
7. “The Sabre in One Hand and the Koran in the Other”	100

PART TWO

1789–1801: REVOLUTION AND TURMOIL

8. Return to Europe	119
9. To Constantinople and Back	132
10. “A Dangerous Man of Enlightenment”	152

11. The Roman Republic 1798–99	179
12. Final Year in Sweden	203

PART THREE

READING EGYPTIAN: DECIPHERING THE ROSETTA INSCRIPTIONS

13. “I Am Alive Only in Paris”	215
14. Åkerblad’s Rosetta <i>Lettre</i>	230
15. Geographic Competition	251
16. Egyptology and Orientalism	264

PART FOUR

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS AND RESTORATION IN ITALY

17. Book Thefts, Inkblots and French Expropriations	291
18. Antiquarian in Rome	307
19. Salons and Belle Amiche	333
20. Curses and Cabals	341
21. Oriental Rome	356
22. Archaeology and Art	361
23. French Defeat	381
24. Digging with the Duchess of Devonshire	392
25. “Despised by Sweden and by Every Swede”	407
Conclusion	413
Bibliography	421
Index	447

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Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any errors contained herein.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Albany	Louise von Stolberg, <i>Le Portefeuille de la Comtesse d'Albany</i> (1806–1824), ed. Léon-G. Péliissier, Paris, 1902
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome
BL	British Library, London
BNCF	Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze
BNF	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
Callmer	Christian Callmer, <i>In Orientem. Svenscars färder och forskningar i den europeiska och asiatiska Orienten under 1700-talet</i> , Stockholm, 1985
Courier	Paul-Louis Courier, <i>Correspondance générale</i> , ed. Geneviève Viollet-le-Duc, 3 vols., Paris, 1976–85
DBI	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani</i>
Forteg.	Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerriana, Pistoia
I de F	Institut de France, Paris
JDÅ	Johan David Åkerblad
KB	Kungliga Biblioteket [National Library of Sweden], Stockholm
KBK	Det Kongelige Bibliotek [The Royal Library], Copenhagen
KVA	Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien [The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences], Stockholm
KVHAA	Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien [The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities], Stockholm
Münter	<i>Frederik Münter. Et Mindeskrift</i> , ed. Øjvind Andreasen, 7 vols., Copenhagen, 1925–49
SBL	<i>Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon</i>
SNA	Riksarkivet [Swedish National Archives], Stockholm
UUL	Uppsala University Library
Vat. lat.	Åkerblad's large notebook in BAV, Vaticani latini 9785

LIST OF PLATES, FIGURES, AND TABLES

Colour Plates

1. Gagneraux. Gustav III's visit to the Vatican Museum.
2. Palais de France.
3. Shahnameh illustration.
4. Åkerblad's drawing of the Acropolis.
5. Dodwell. Dinner at Crisso.
6. C. G. Löwenhielm. Janissary.
7. Pasch the younger. Portrait of Mouradgea d'Ohsson.
8. The mummy Åkerblad acquired in Egypt.
9. West pediment, Aegina Aphaia temple.
10. Angelica Kauffmann. Portrait of G. A. Reuterholm.
11. Åkerblad's 1796 passport.
12. Åkerblad's map of the Troad.
13. Stuart and Revett. Erechteion.
14. Dodwell. Erechteion.
15. Sillén. View of Paestum.
16. Åkerblad's drawings of the Venice lion.
17. Åkerblad's drawing of a bilingual Phoenician/Greek funerary monument.
18. Hilleström. The Royal Museum.
19. Åkerblad's Phoenician alphabet.
20. Åkerblad's transcription of the Coptic cursive.
21. Åkerblad's copy of the SAL print of the Rosetta Demotic inscription.
- 22a,b,c,d,e. Details from Åkerblad's Demotic work.
23. Detail of Åkerblad's print of the Rosetta Demotic inscription.
24. Detail of Åkerblad's print of the Rosetta Demotic inscription.
25. Åkerblad's list of the words he found in the Demotic Rosetta inscription.
26. Åkerblad's Egyptian alphabet with changes and erasures post publication.
27. Åkerström. 1788 meeting at Accademia Arcadia.
28. Pomardi. Grave close to Piraeus.
29. Pomardi. Second version of grave close to Piraeus.

30. Lead curse tablet.
31. Letter from Brønsted communicating a curse tablet.
32. Thorvaldsen. Sketch of Wilhelm von Humboldt and Georg Zoëga.
33. Thorvaldsen. Alexander frieze in situ at the Quirinale.
34. Åkerblad's drawing of his Ethiopic language teacher Giyorgis.
35. Unknown artist. Jonas Åkerströms's funeral.

Figures

1. Map of Åkerblad's permanencies and travels	3
2. Map of Åkerblad's publications and academy memberships ...	8
3. Gagneraux. Gustav III's visit to the Vatican Museum	27
4. Multilingual album celebrating Gustav III's visit to the <i>Propaganda Fide</i>	29
5. Map of Constantinople	32
6. Garden of Palais de France	45
7. Garden of Palais de France, detail	46
8. Map of Constantinople	49
9. Shahnameh illustration	53
10. Floor plan of the Swedish mission in Constantinople	55
11. Map of the extension of the the plague 1784–86	60
12. Map of the battle of Çesme	66
13. Åkerblad's drawing of Acropolis	69
14. Map of Åkerblad's tour of the archipelago 1785	70
15. View of Aleppo	73
16. Åkerblad's map of Lebanese monasteries	75
17. Map of Åkerblad's travels in 1786–87	78
18. Capitan Pasha salutes the sultan	81
19. Phoenician inscriptions	92
20. View of Dumyat	106
21. Map of Åkerblad's travels in the Delta 1788	107
22. Janissary	108
23. Dodwell. Dinner at Crisso	110
24. Åkerblad's list of words in Arabian dialects	111
25. Choiseul-Gouffier's audience with Hassan Tchaousch-Oglou ...	115
26. Plan of the Lazaretto in Marseille	120
27. C. G. Löwenhielm. Janissary	124
28. The mummy Åkerblad acquired in Egypt	126
29. View of Constantinople from the Swedish mission	136

30.	Kauffmann. Portrait of G. A. Reuterholm	154
31.	Pasch the younger. Portrait of Mouradgea d'Ohsson ..	160
32.	Åkerblad's 1796 passport	164
33.	Åkerblad's drawing of so-called 'Prisons of Socrates' in Athens	168
34.	Åkerblad's map of the Troad	169
35a,b.	Stuart and Revett. Erechteion; Dodwell. Erechteion ...	172
36.	Pomardi. Tomb in Piraeus	175
37.	Sillén. View of Paestum	180
38.	Thorvaldsen. Drawing of G. Zoëga	182
39.	Åkerblad's inscription from Imbros	194
40.	Åkerblad's drawings of the Venice lion	195
41.	Åkerblad's drawing of a bilingual Phoenician/Greek funerary monument	200
42.	Hilleström. The Royal Museum	208
43.	Åkerblad's Phoenician inscription and alphabet	218
44.	Åkerblad's Coptic cursive	220
45.	View of Rashid	222
46.	Åkerblad's print of the Rosetta Demotic inscription ...	232
47a,b,c,d,e.	Details from Åkerblad's Demotic work	234
48.	Åkerblad's examples of words from the Demotic inscription	236
49.	Åkerblad's Egyptian alphabet with erasures and changes	238
50.	Greek epitaph from the cathedral in Bari	303
51.	Ink blot on Longus manuscript	305
52.	Thorvaldsen. Drawing of G. Zoëga and W. v Humboldt	313
53.	Åkerblad's copies of inscriptions	317
54.	Åkerblad's copy of an Etruscan inscription	323
55.	Åkerström. 1788 meeting at Accademia Arcadia	328
56.	Åkerström. 1788 meeting at Accademia Arcadia, details	329
57.	Greek lead tablet	342
58.	Letter from Brønsted communicating a curse tablet ...	348
59.	Åkerblad's drawing of his Ethiopian language teacher	358
60.	Åkerblad's copy of a Phoenician inscription	359
61.	Sillén. Forum Romanum	362

62.	Thorvaldsen. Alexander frieze in situ at the Quirinale	368
63.	Friezes in Persepolis	369
64.	Thorvaldsen. Alexander frieze, marble copy	370
65.	West pediment, Aegina Aphaia temple	374
66.	View of the Colosseum	387
67a,b,c.	Cavendish. Cyclopean walls in Praeneste; Åkerblad's drawing of a 'cyclopean' wall; Dodwell. Subterranean gate at Alatrium	397
68.	Campidoglio	399
69.	Unknown artist. The excavations at the Phocas column ..	400
70.	Alaux. Column of Phocas	402
71.	Forum Romanum	404
72a,b.	Pinelli. Funeral at the Cimitero Acattolico 1811; Unknown artist. Jonas Åkerströms' funeral	410

Tables

1.	Chronology of the life of Åkerblad	14
2.	Principal events in the decipherment	250

COLOUR PLATES



Pl. 1, fig. 3. Bénigne Gagneraux. Gustav III visits the Vatican Museum. National-museum, Stockholm.



Pl. 2, fig. 5. Palais de France. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1: pl. 76 bis.
UUL.



Pl. 3, fig. 9. Illustration in a *Shahnameh* manuscript acquired by Åkerblad in Constantinople in 1792. Fol. 2r, C-822. Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg.



Pl. 4, fig. 13. Åkerblad's view of the Acropolis and the so-called Cimonian Sepulchres. Fol. 6iv, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.



Pl. 5, fig. 23. Edward Dowell. *Views in Greece*, pl. 2, Dinner at Crisso. UUL.



Pl. 6, fig. 27. Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm. Janissary. UUL.



Pl. 7, fig. 31. Lorens Pasch the younger. Mouradgea d'Ohsson. Private collection.
Photo Sture Theolin.



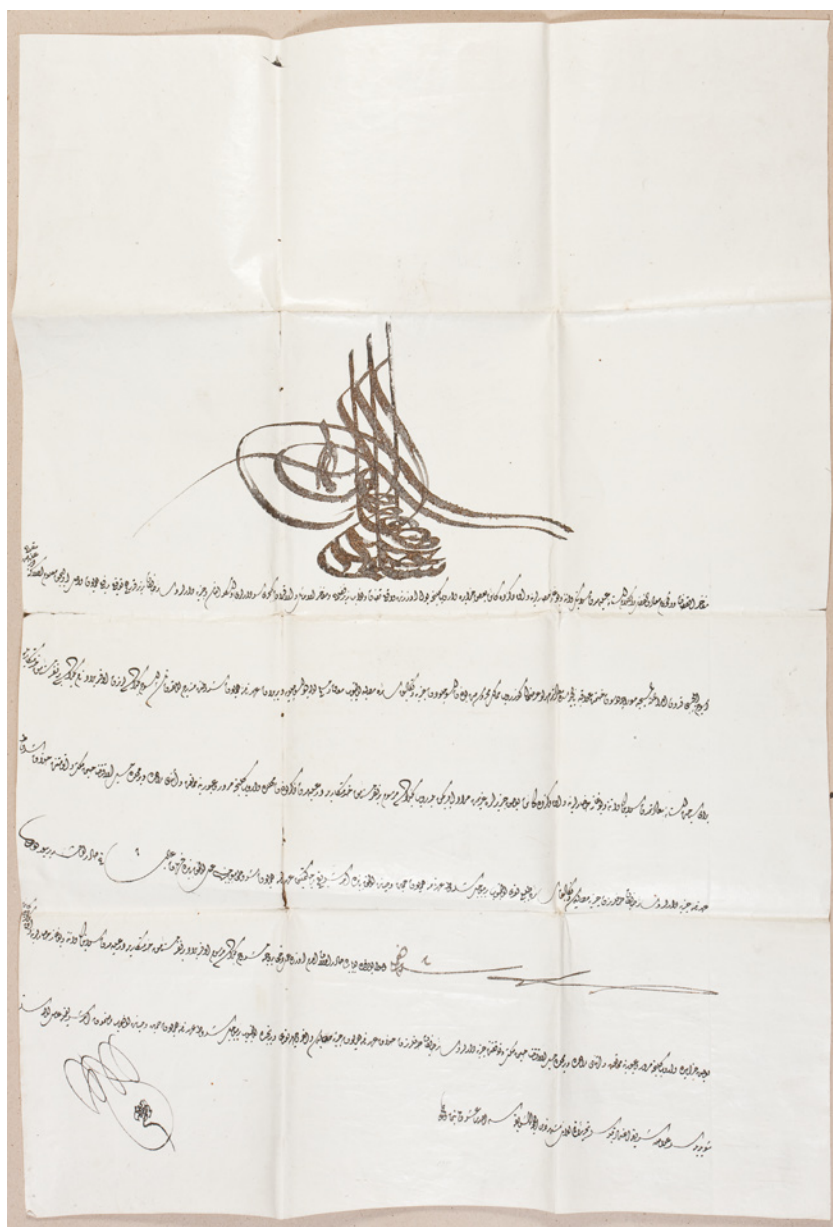
Pl. 8, fig. 28. The case of the mummy Åkerblad acquired in Egypt. Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. Photo Ove Kaneberg.



Pl. 9, fig. 65. West pediment, Aegina Aphaia temple. Furtwängler, *Aegina*, 2: pl. 104. UUL.



Pl. 10, fig. 30. Angelica Kauffmann. Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.



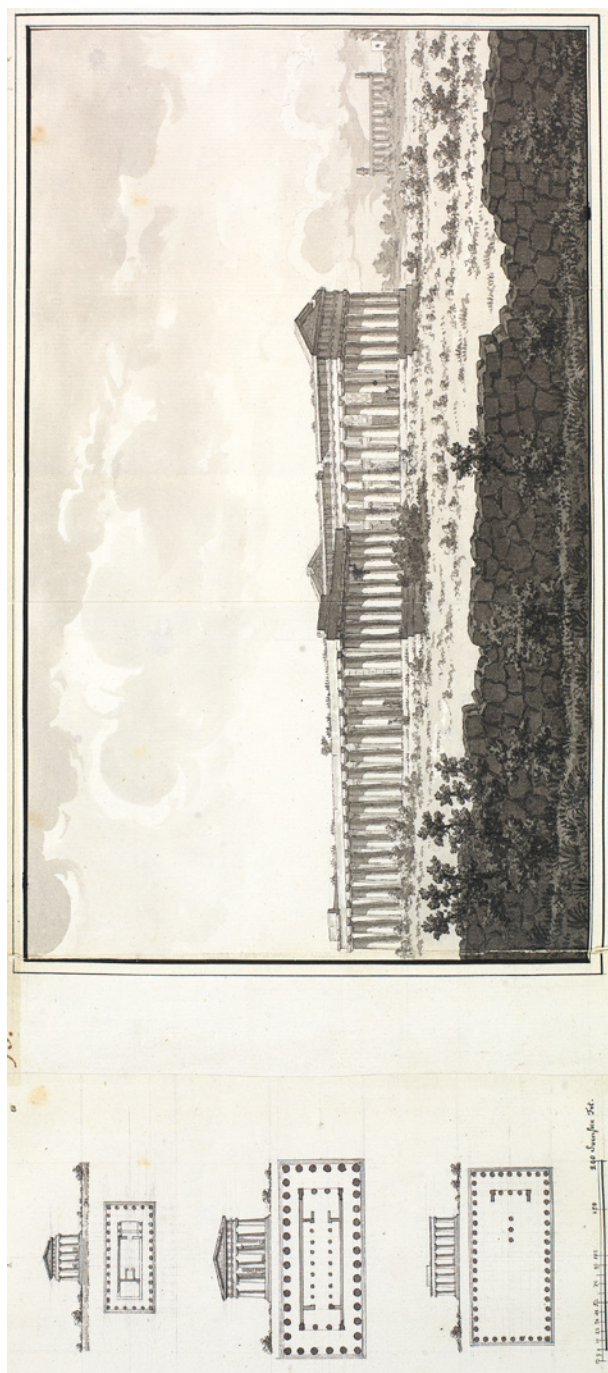
Pl. 11, fig. 32. Åkerblad's 1796 passport. MS Dorn 543/50. National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg.



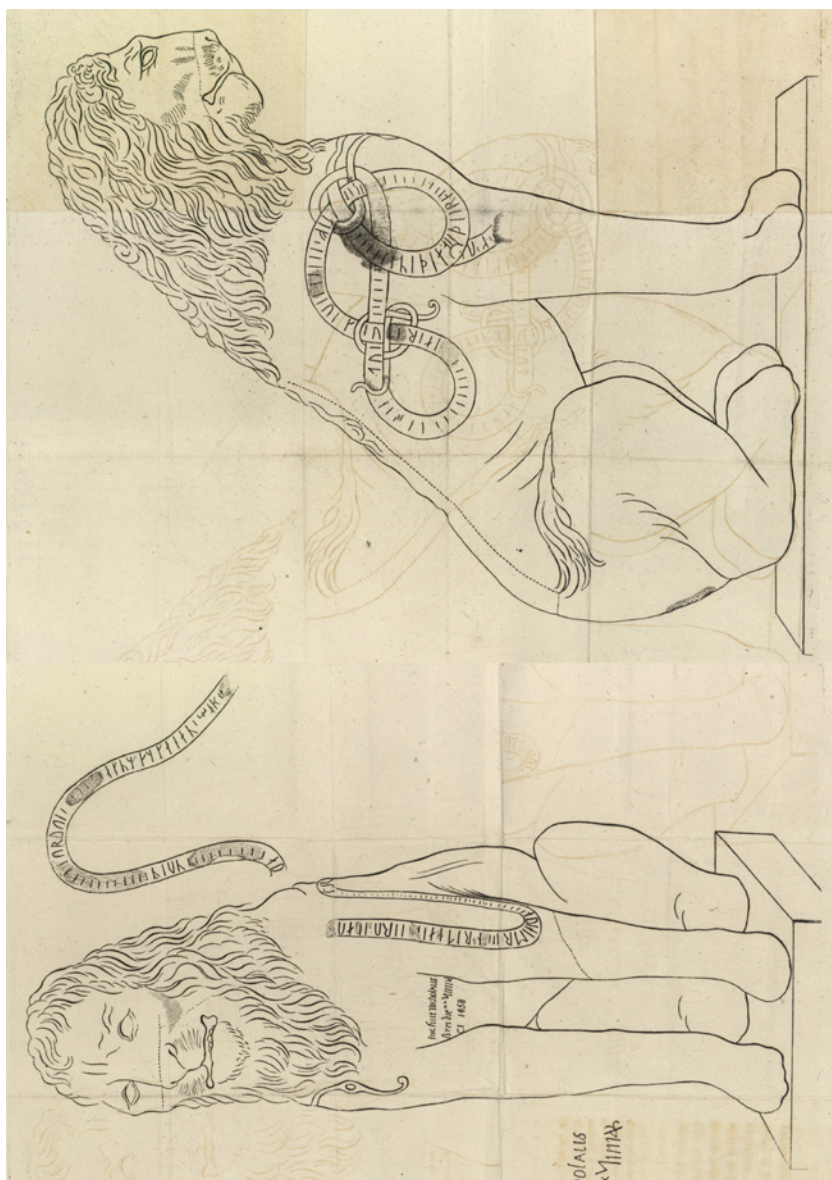
Pl. 13, fig. 35a. James Stuart and Nicholas Revett. *The Antiquities of Athens*, 2: ch. 2, pl. 2, Erechtheion. UUL.



Pl. 14, fig. 35b. Edward Dodwell. *Views in Greece*, pl. 9, South-west view of the Erechtheion. UUL.



Pl. 15, fig. 37. Gustaf af Sillén. Temples in Paestum. P. 93, X 292 g. UUL.



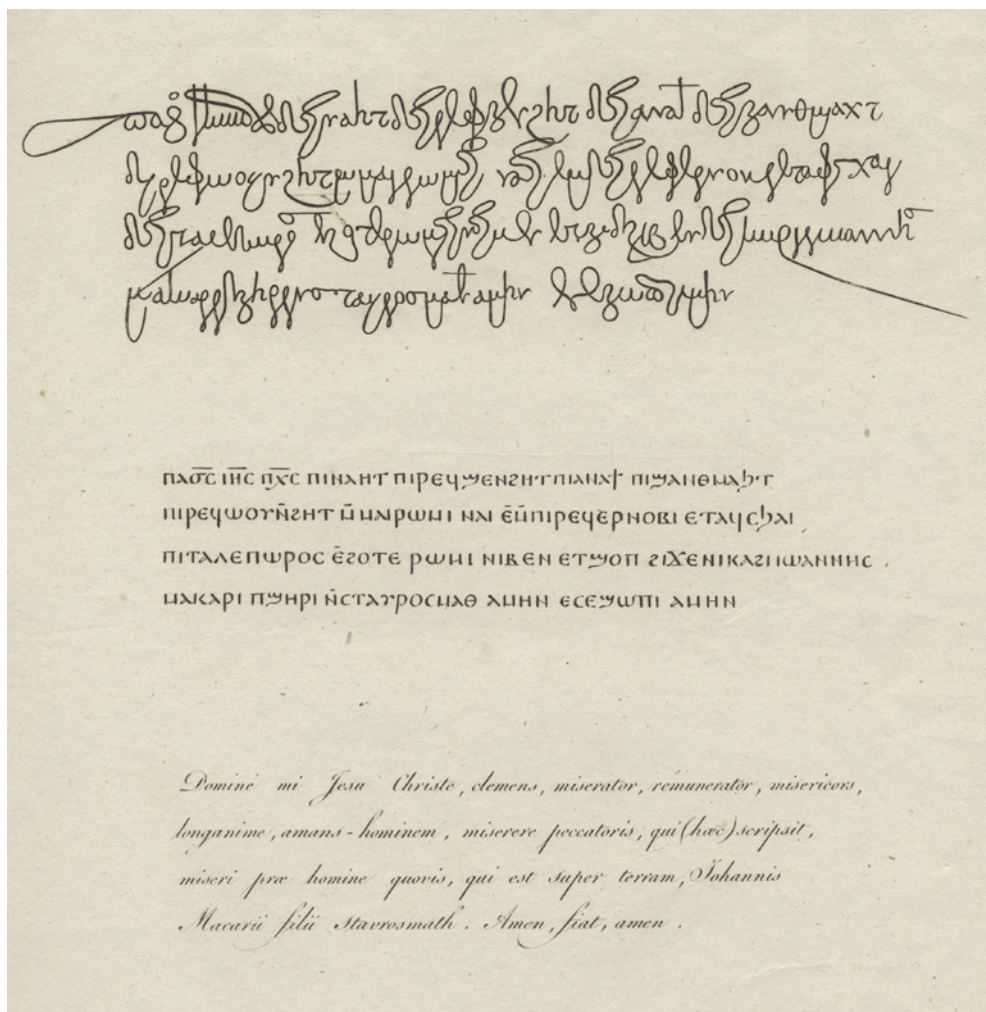
Pl. 16, fig. 40. Åkerblad's printed drawings of the Venice lion. Åkerblad, *Runskrift på Sittande Marmorleyonet*. UUL.



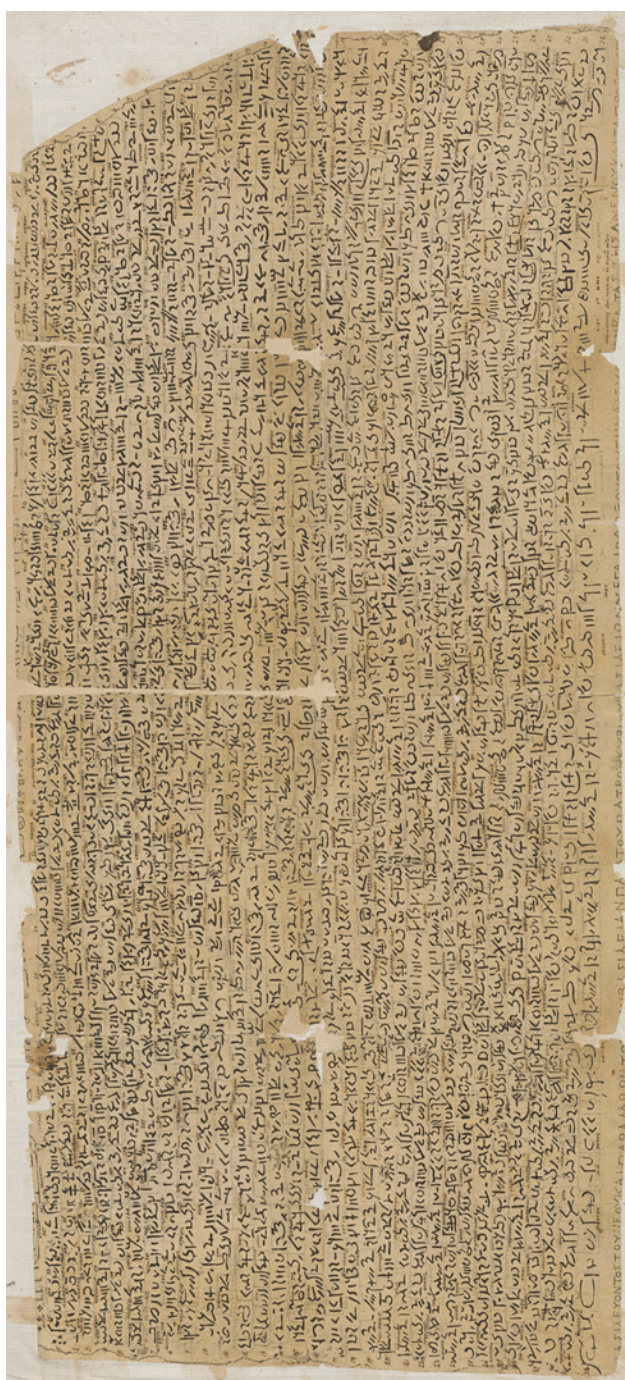
Pl. 18, fig. 42. Pehr Hilleström. The main gallery of the Royal Museum, c. 1796.
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.



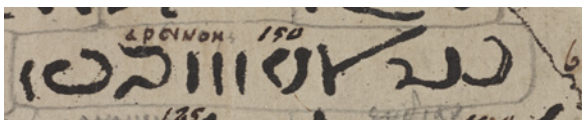
Pl. 19, fig. 43. Plate from Åkerblad's treatise on the Phoenician inscription from Kition in Cyprus. He identified different forms of the Phoenician letters from Malta [Melitens], Cyprus and Athens. Åkerblad, *Inscriptionis Phœniciae Oxoniensis*. UUL.



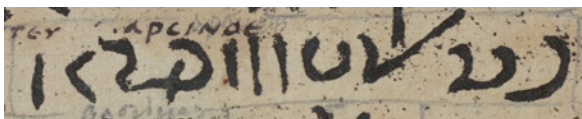
Pl. 20, fig. 44. The Coptic cursive that Åkerblad discovered in one of the Coptic manuscripts taken from Rome by the French. Below Åkerblad's copy of the text is his transcription in Coptic and translation into Latin. Åkerblad, *Cursive copte*. N72. KB.



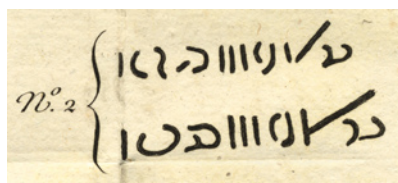
Pl. 21, fig. 46. Åkerblad's copy of the SAL print of the Demotic Rosetta inscription.
N71a. KB.



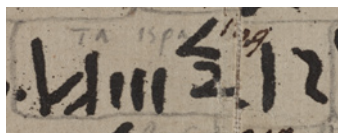
a. The name of the queen Arsinoë, word 150, line 6.



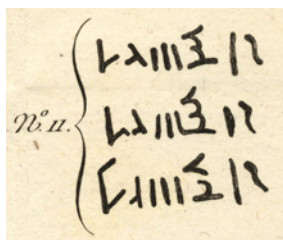
b. The name of the queen Arsinoë, line 24.



c. Åkerblad's transcription of two instances of name of the queen Arsinoë.
Åkerblad, *L'inscription égyptienne de Rosette*, pl. 1. UUL.

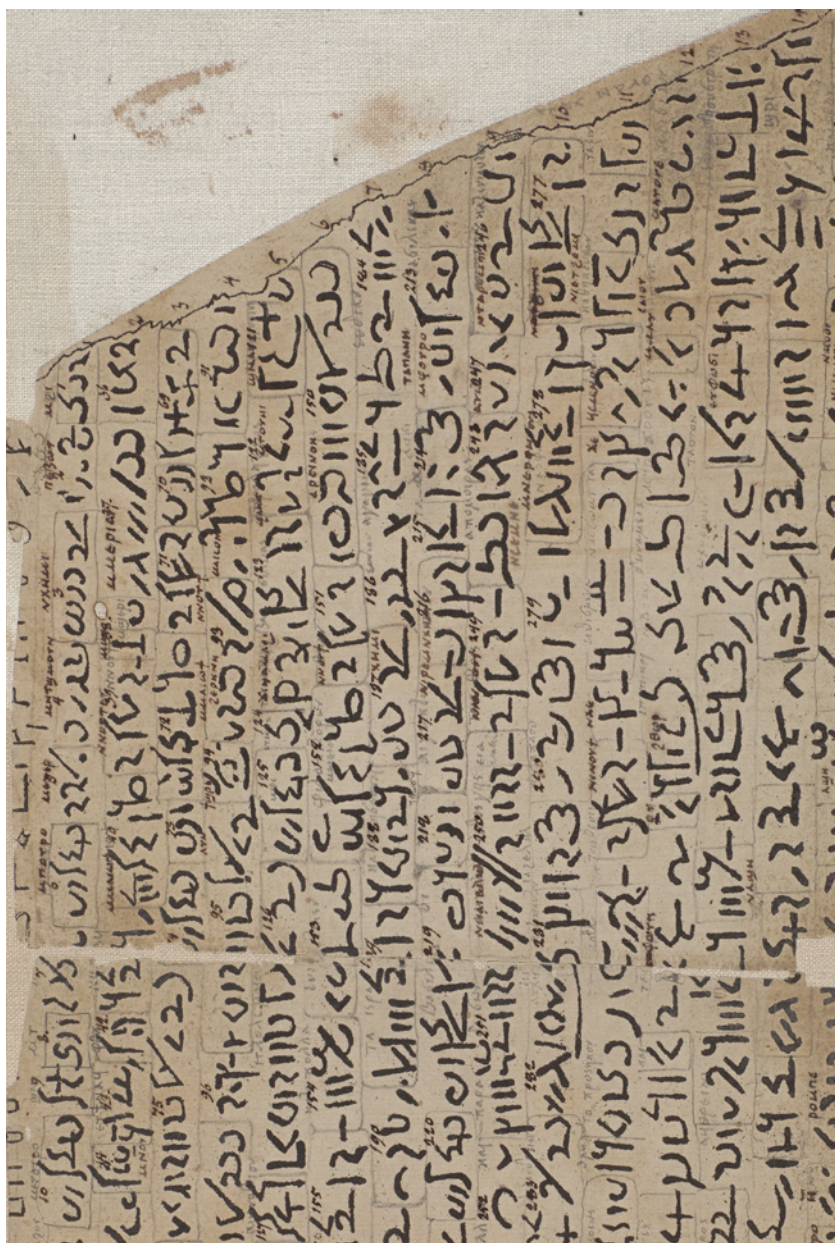


d. The word 'temple,' word 189 on line 7.

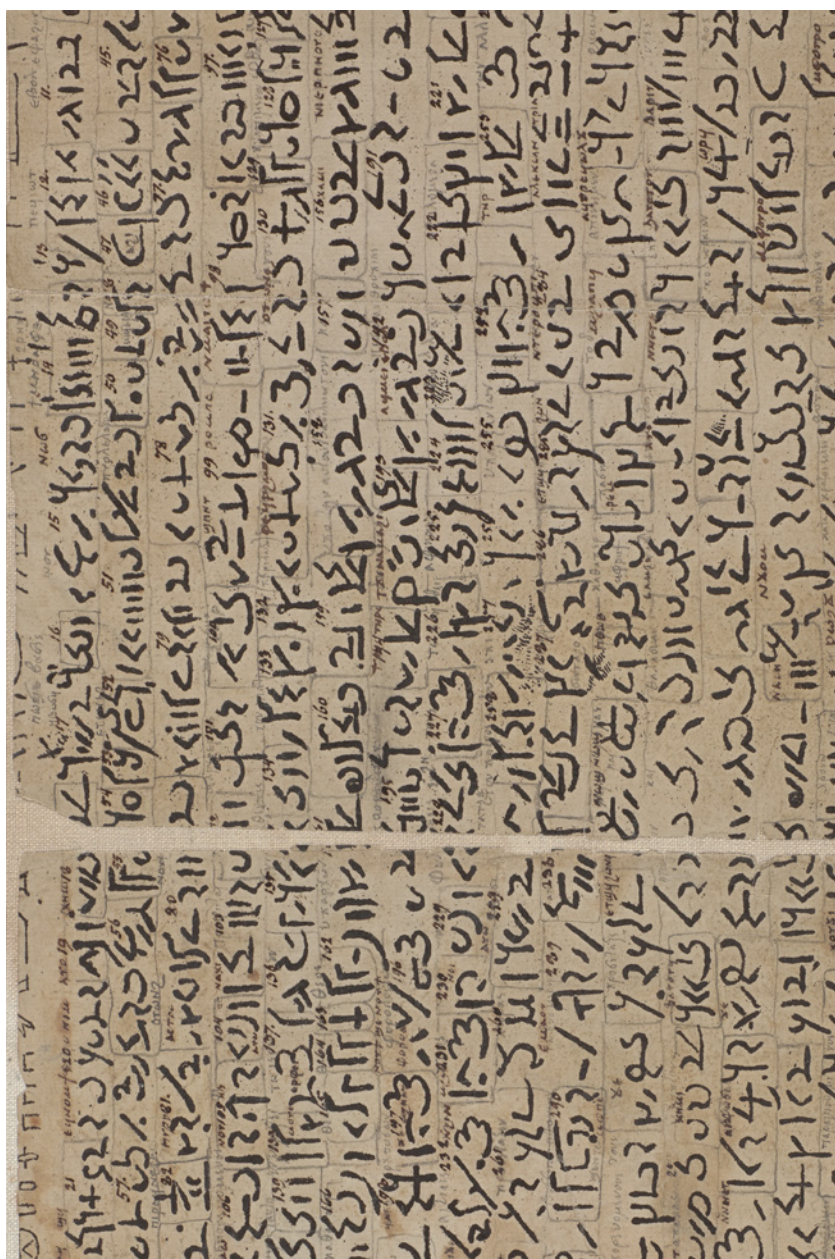


e. Åkerblad's transcription of three instances of the word 'temple.' Åkerblad,
L'inscription égyptienne de Rosette, pl. 1. UUL.

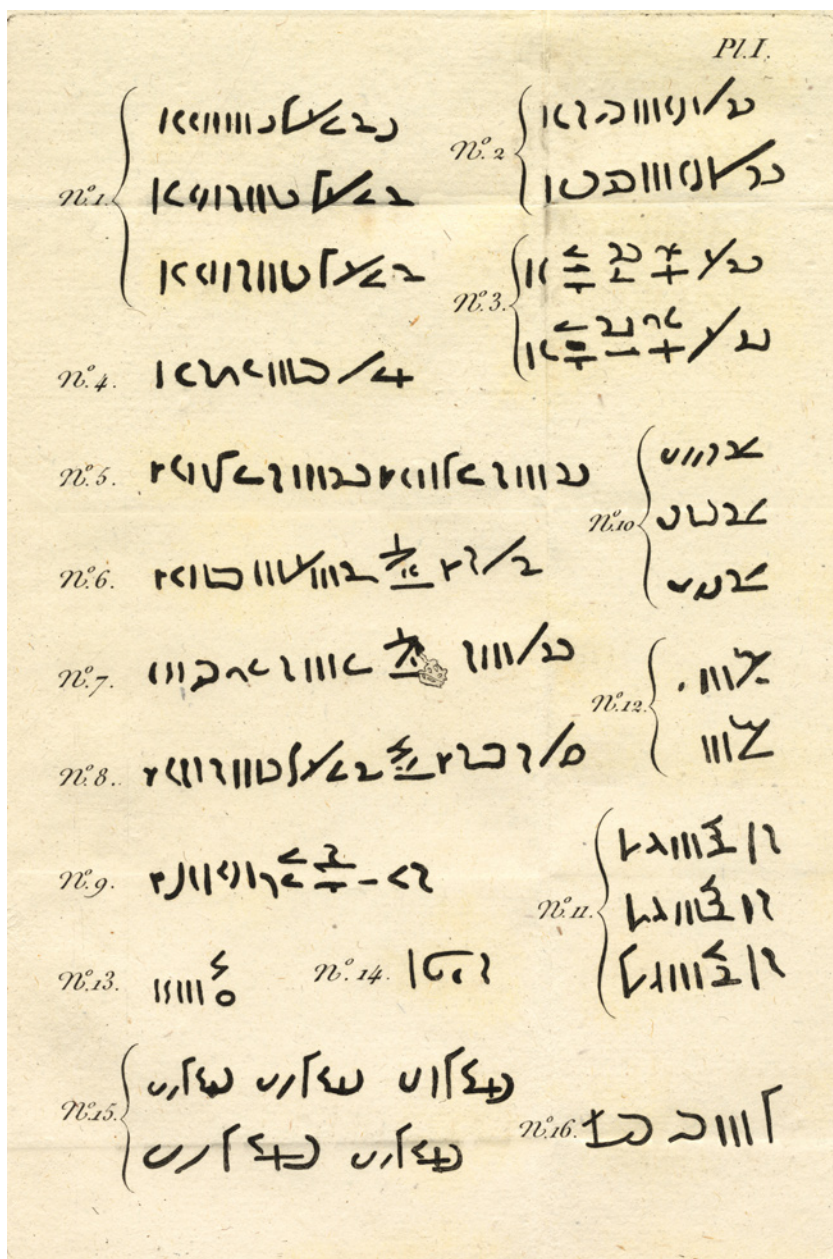
Pl. 22a–e, figs. 47a–e. Details from Åkerblad's Demotic work. Each line on the Demotic print is approximately 8–12 mm high.



Pl. 23. Line 1–14, first part, on Åkerblad's print of the Demotic inscription.



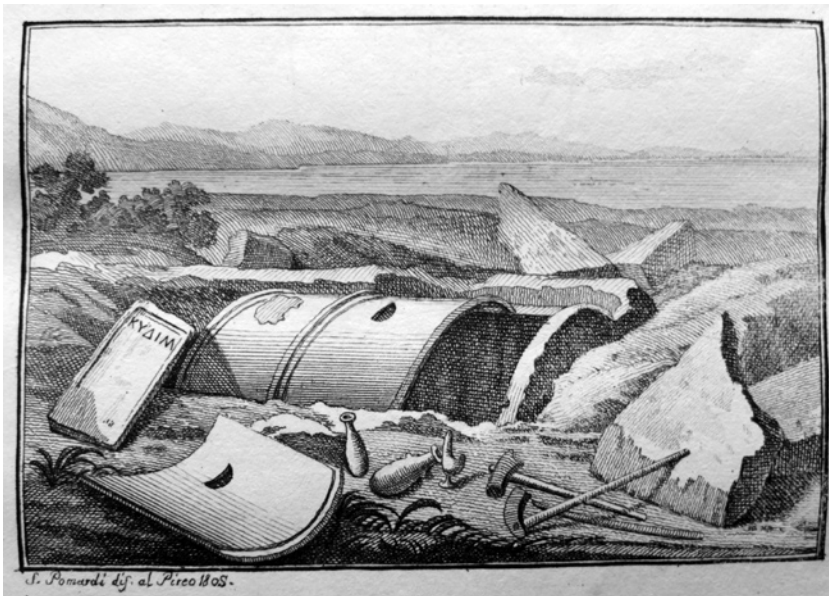
Pl. 24. Line 1–14, second part, on Åkerblad's print of the Demotic inscription.



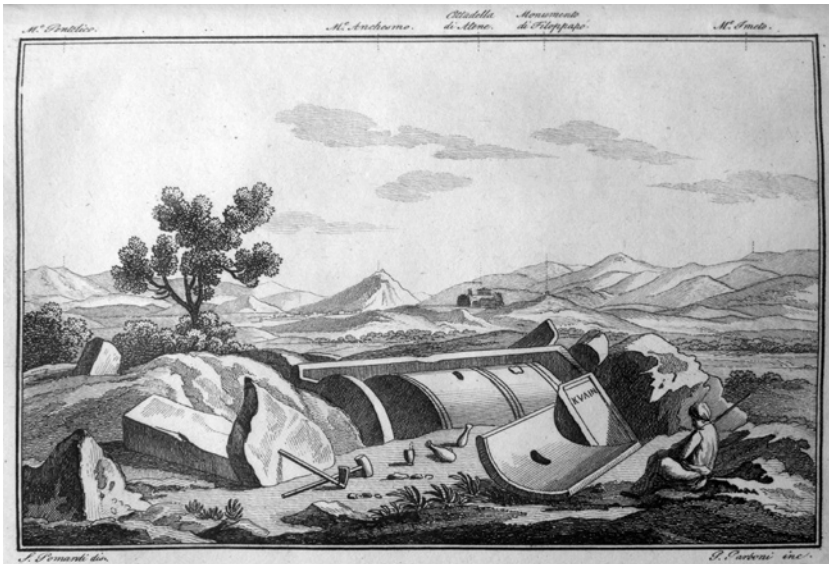
Pl. 25, fig. 48. Åkerblad's list of the words he found in the Demotic Rosetta inscription. Åkerblad, *L'inscription égyptienne de Rosette*, pl. 1. UUL.



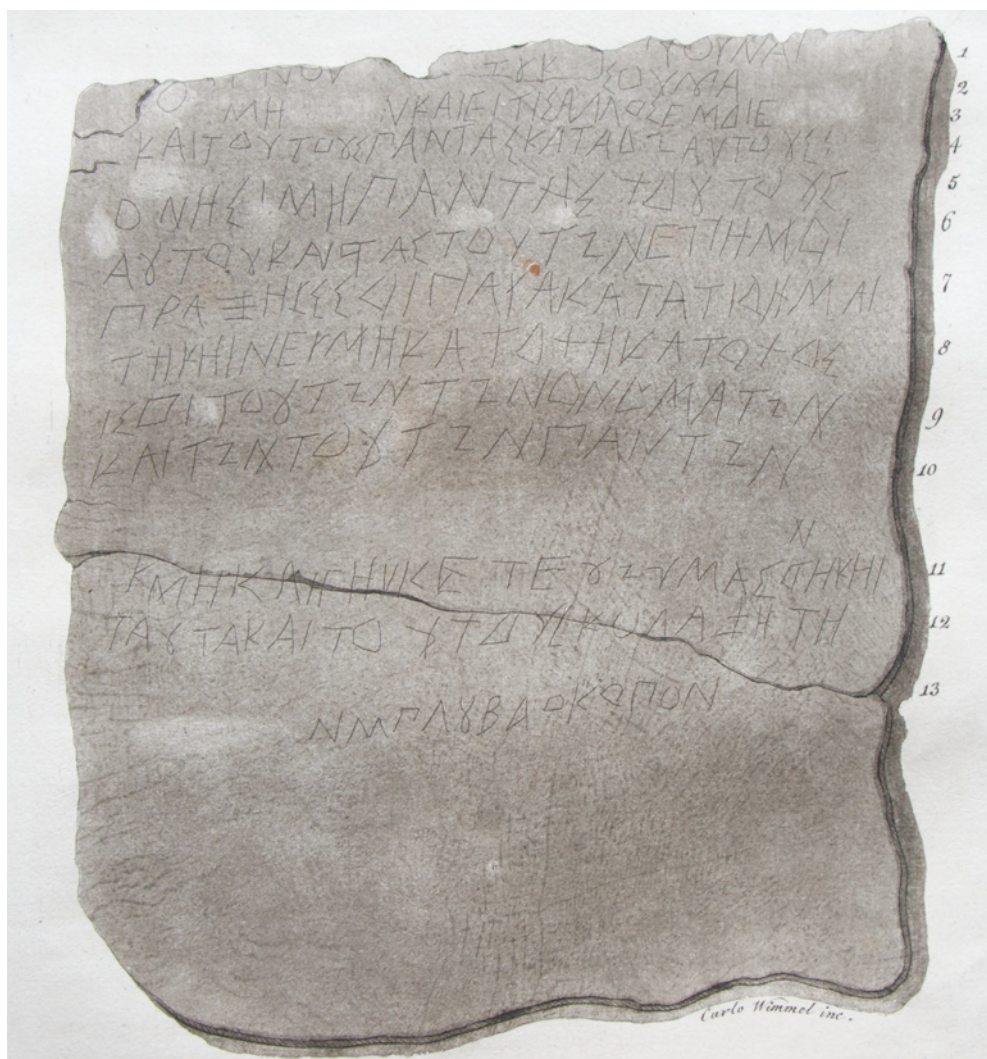
Pl. 27, fig. 55. Jonas Åkerström. 1788 reunion of the Accademia dell'Arcadia in Rome. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.



Pl. 28, fig. 36. Simone Pomardi. The grave close to Piraeus where the curse tablet that Åkerblad published was found. Frontispiece in Åkerblad, *Lamina Piombo*. Photo author.



Pl. 29. Pomardi published another engraving of the same grave in his travelogue from Greece. Note the grave's location and vicinity to Athens. Pomardi, *Viaggio nella Grecia*, pl. at 1175. Photo author.



Pl. 30, fig. 57. The small lead curse tablet with difficult to read magical invocations in Ancient Greek. Åkerblad, *Lamina Piombo*. Photo author.

Inscription gravée sur une petite plaque de plomb détachée à Athènes, dans le mois de May 1812. C'est M. Gaspari, Dragonier de France qui me l'a communiqué :

ΔΑΙΜΟΝΙ ΧΘΟΝΙΩΙ ΚΑΙΤΗΙ ΧΘΟ
ΝΙΑΙ ΚΑΙΤΟΙΣ ΧΘΟΝΙΟΙΣ ΓΑΣΙ
ΠΕΜΠΩ ΔΩΡΟΝ ΔΕΧΕΤΕ ΕΛΕΜΕΝΩΣ
ΚΑΤΑ ΧΘΟΝΙΑΥΤΟΝ ΔΟΜΙΝΩΣ ΚΑΙ
ΧΕ ΤΙΡΑΓΑ ΘΕΑ ΑΥΤΟΥ Ν ΙΛΛΑ ΚΑΤΑ
ΔΥΝΑΤΑ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΧΟΝΙΣΑ ΛΑΘΗ
ΤΕΓΗΝ ΠΟΣΕ ΛΑΣΤΟΝ ΚΑΙΤΗΝ
ΤΥΧΗΝ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΑΓΕΤΕ ΑΥΤΗΝ
ΝΕΟΣ ΙΠΤΥΝ ΒΙΟΙ ΕΝ ΕΡΙΝΕ ΕΥ ΣΠΟΥΗ
ΤΗΤΑΙ ΧΙΣΤΗΝ ΤΟ ΔΕ ΠΟΤΝΙΑ ΔΟ
... ΑΝΤΙ ΠΗΑ ΦΙΜΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΗΝ ΤΩΝ
ΚΑΔΩΝ ΡΕΙΝ ΔΕΧΕΤΕ
ΤΡΙΑ ΧΙΟΙΟ . ΑΝΙΕ
ΔΕ ΣΤΟΤΟΙ ΧΘΟΝΙΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΓΙΤΥΝ + +
ΒΙΟΙ ΑΦΗΣ ΔΕ ΔΩΚΑ ΔΕ ΔΩΚΑ (ΙΙΕ) ΔΕ ΛΑΤΗΝ Κ
ΜΕΧΡΙ ΗΜΕΡΩ (ΙΙΕ) ΤΕΤΑΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ

Voilà, Monsieur, l'inscription mutilée que j'ai eu l'honneur de Vous
promettre. Je n'en ai pas pu tirer parti comme je l'aurais désiré.
J'attends de vos lumières une explication satisfaisante.
Veuillez bien agréer, Monsieur, mes complimens
très respectueux

Rome w 21 Maj 1813.

Wm Brewster

Pl. 31, fig. 58. Peter Oluf Brøndsted's letter to Åkerblad communicating the text of one of the curse tablets published by Åkerblad in 1813. The pencil annotations are Åkerblad's. This is the only known original letter to Åkerblad. N72. KB.



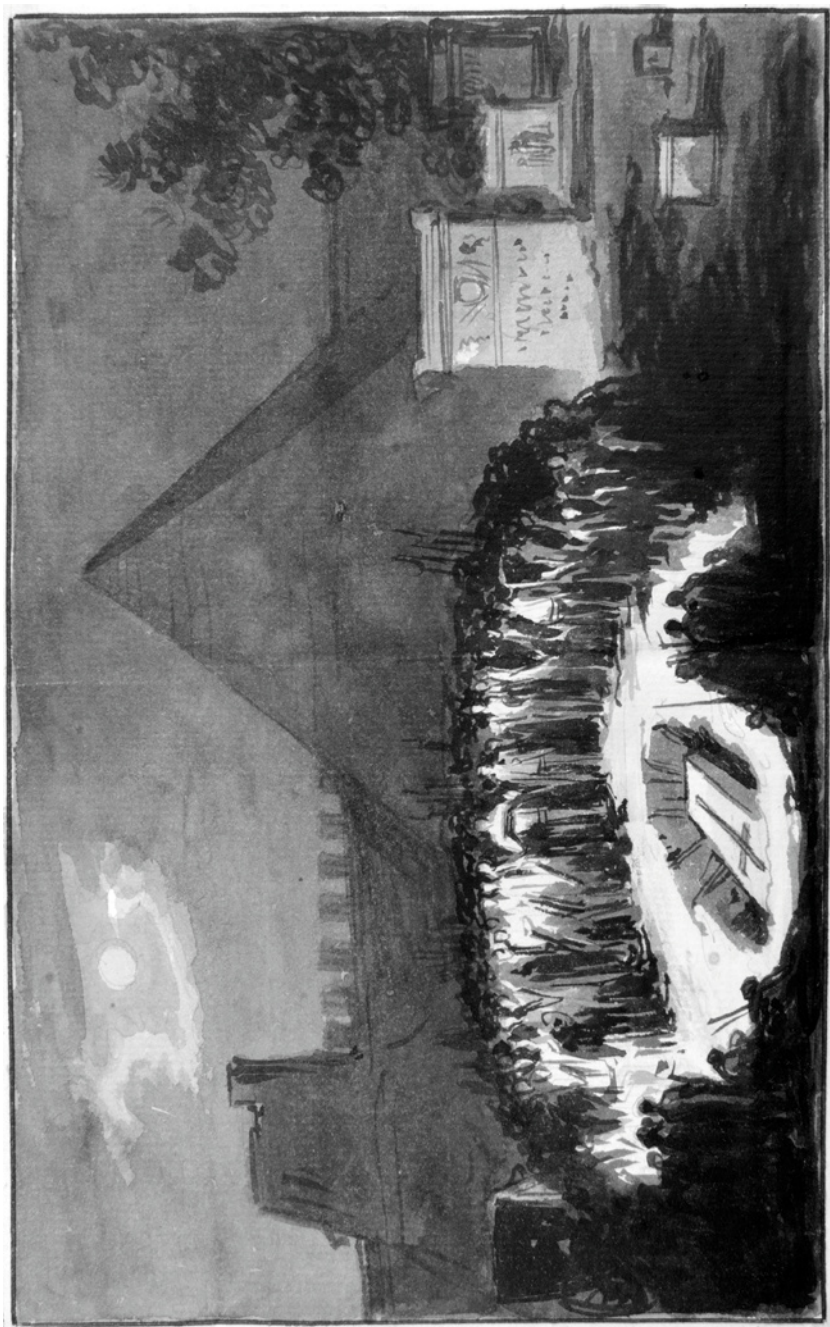
Pl. 32, fig. 52. Bertel Thorvaldsen. Left: Wilhelm von Humboldt; right: Georg Zoëga. C79v. Thorvaldsens Museum.



Pl. 33, fig. 62. Bertel Thorvaldsen. The end of the Alexander frieze in situ at the Quirinale. Thorvaldsens Museum.



Pl. 34, fig. 59. Åkerblad's drawing of his Ethiopic language teacher Giyorgis. N72. KB.



Pl. 35, fig. 72b. Unknown artist. Jonas Åkerström's 1795 funeral at the Cimitero acattolico. Biographica, Åkerström (kartavd. m form). SNA. Photo author.

INTRODUCTION

In 1797 Johan David Åkerblad was secretary at the Swedish mission in Constantinople. It was his third posting to the capital and his tenth year in the Ottoman Empire. Åkerblad wrote to his superior in Stockholm lamenting the situation at the mission and the fact that his political opinions met with resistance: "I was considered a dangerous man of Enlightenment who knew the country, people and circumstances, and furthermore stubborn enough not to act against my convictions."¹

This statement provides a rare glimpse of what Åkerblad saw when he looked in the mirror. In many ways he was a man of the Enlightenment. He had equipped himself with exceptional knowledge of the Ottoman Empire. During the previous decade and a half he had travelled extensively in the Eastern Mediterranean. He spoke many of the Empire's languages perfectly and could travel in disguise. He knew more than any Swede at this time about the culture, history and politics of the Near East.

Born a commoner, he despised the institution of nobility and the monarchy. He had with growing unease witnessed the descent of Sweden into increasingly despotic politics. In 1789, he reacted with enthusiasm to the revolutionary events in France. Åkerblad perceived a heroic streak in his own stubbornness, and one may be tempted to think that the suspicions he aroused were a source of pride to him. But his convictions were also a source of anxiety in his relations with his superiors and patrons. It was the tension between his own interests and convictions and the necessity to make a living by serving the state that shaped his early career. This tension also resulted in his leading an exceptional life which the present biography traces.

Just like Swedish foreign policies during the 1790s, Åkerblad's existence was torn between different loyalties. While he tried obsessively to find the means and the time to pursue his scholarly interests he also coveted the opportunities of diplomatic service that gave him the chance to travel and engage in his scholarly interests outside of Sweden. He received several offers of foreign service. For example, on the merits of his language

¹ Johan David Åkerblad (hereafter JDÅ) to Schering Rosenhane, 25 February 1797, Constantinople, G 231 h, Uppsala University Library (hereafter UUL).

skills he was invited to join the French invasion of Egypt but he rejected this offer.

Sweden had been an ally of the Ottoman Empire throughout the eighteenth century. The fact that they shared a common enemy provided the glue for the friendship: both bordered the aggressive and expansionist Russia. In 1790, after an ill-advised war in which Åkerblad served, Sweden signed a separate peace treaty with Russia. This broke Sweden's alliance with Turkey. In the years following the assassination of the Swedish king in 1792, Swedish politics became increasingly chaotic. Swedish interest in the Ottoman Empire waned, ruining Åkerblad's prospects of continuing in diplomatic service.

Åkerblad was an outstanding scholar of both classical and oriental languages. He studied one language after another and developed new linguistic interests throughout his life. By the 1780s his already wide-ranging knowledge included Ancient Greek, Hebrew, Phoenician, Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Indeed it was Åkerblad's exceptional knowledge of Coptic that led to his being allowed to work with prints of the Rosetta Stone that the French army had found during the invasion of Egypt in 1799. Åkerblad is today mainly remembered for the treatise on the Rosetta inscription that he published in Paris in 1802. He managed to read some words in the middle inscription on the stone, a script we now call Demotic. He was the first to prove that Coptic was a direct descendant of the ancient Egyptian language. Åkerblad is mentioned as one of Jean-François Champollion's predecessors in histories of the decipherment of the hieroglyphs. In fact, his importance as an orientalist and a classical scholar was recognized in his lifetime.

But the Napoleonic wars put a stop to this form of international scholarly work. Åkerblad had to leave Paris when Sweden severed diplomatic relations with France in 1804. He disobeyed royal orders to return to Sweden and instead went to Italy where he died in Rome in 1819.

Little is written about Åkerblad. The only essay (55 pages) was published by Christian Callmer (1908–85) in 1952 and reprinted in 1985 with minor changes.² The second edition was printed together with other essays on Swedish eighteenth-century oriental voyagers. Callmer focused on

² Christian Callmer, "Johan David Åkerblad: Ett bidrag till hans biografi," *Lychnos*, 1952, 130–85; "Johan David Åkerblad" in Callmer, *In Orientem: Svenscars färder och forskningar i den europeiska och asiatiska Orienten under 1700-talet* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985), 169–221. References are to this second edition (hereafter *Callmer*).

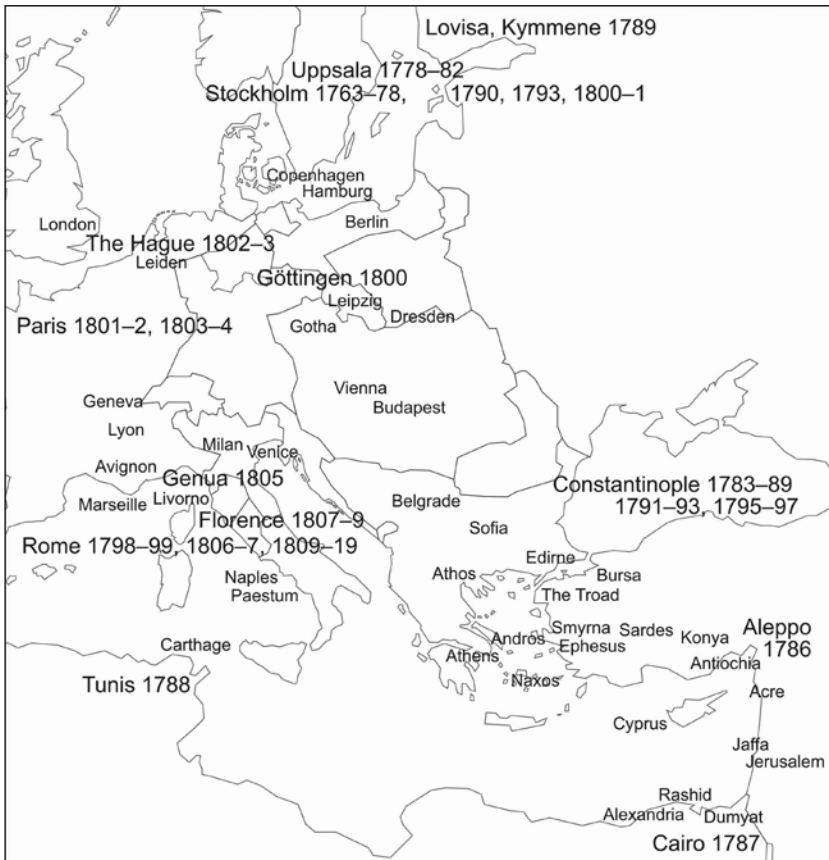


Figure 1. Åkerblad spent almost all of his adult life outside Sweden. From when he left Sweden for his first posting to Constantinople in 1783 he lived more than 30 of his 36 remaining years abroad. The cities in large type with years are those where he stayed for at least three months, those in a smaller typeface are a few of the many places he visited while travelling. The national borders are those of 1812 when the French Empire had reached its greatest extent.

Åkerblad's early travels while his later life is summarily described. While Callmer's command of the mainly Swedish sources covering Åkerblad's early life is excellent he did not investigate Åkerblad's 15 years in Italy. Similarly he says little about Åkerblad's personal life and virtually nothing about politics, social intricacies and polemics.

The present book takes a biographical approach despite the fact that the biographical genre has been the subject of wide-ranging discussions. Its function within the field of history has been repeatedly questioned and

the resulting bibliography is large.³ The uses of biography are manifold and one common critique is that biography promotes nationalism.⁴ What better expresses the greatness of a nation than the deeds of its prominent men and women? However, the issue of promoting nationalism does not arise when writing about Åkerblad. He had a fractious relationship with Sweden and today one of the rationales for writing about him is his status as an outsider. Hopefully this book will not be seen as a vindication of a *Swedish* scholar. From the year he left university Åkerblad spent more than 30 of the remaining 36 years of his life abroad (Figure 1). He had, both during his diplomatic postings and his career as a scholar, problems coming to terms with Swedish politics and the learned world in Stockholm. His life abroad and his complicated relationship with Sweden make it impossible to view or analyse his trajectory as a diplomat and scholar from only a Swedish perspective. Åkerblad is instead an example of how a marginal scholar tried to navigate a system of learning that was increasingly connected to ideals of national endeavours and glory.

It can be argued that the discussion about biographies of natural scientists has become more fully developed than that concerning the humanistic sciences (and this is not the place to discuss the meaning of 'science'). Natural scientists' life-histories have been informed by recent sociological and historical debate and the 'social history of science' has almost become a separate genre in itself. This literature aims to challenge the worn notion of the solitary scientist making great discoveries by framing these discoveries within the wider social context of scientific thinking and practices.⁵ Such theorizing is much more infrequently explicit in

³ Biography is an often criticized genre in historical writing. For a short exposé of its 'problems' see e.g. Sabina Loriga, "La biographie comme problème," in *Jeux d'échelles : la micro-analyse à l'expérience*, ed. Jacques Revel (Paris: Gallimard, 1996). In the Swedish context several titles have recently discussed academic biography: Ronny Ambjörnsson, Per Ringby, and Sune Åkerman, eds., *Att skriva människan: Essäer om biografien som livshistoria och vetenskaplig genre* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1997); Evert Baudou, ed., *Forskarbiografen* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets historie och antikvitets akademien, 1998); Henrik Rosengren and Johan Östling, eds., *Med livet som insats: Biografien som humanistisk genre* (Lund: Sekel, 2007).

⁴ The connections between the writing of history and nascent nationalism have been incessantly mapped; for introductions see: Stefan Berger, Mark Donovan, and Kevin Passmore, eds., *Writing National Histories: Western Europe since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1999); Christoph Conrad and Sebastian Conrad, eds., *Die Nation schreiben: Geschichtswissenschaft im internationalen Vergleich* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).

⁵ Token examples: Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life: Including a Translation of Thomas Hobbes, Dialogus Physicus de Natura Aeris by Simon Schaffer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985); Steven

biographies of humanistic scholars. The reasons for this are manifold and cannot simply be explained by reluctance on the part of humanistic biographers to engage with methodological debate.⁶ Natural science processes of investigation are—at least superficially—often easier to define by their outcome and to account for in a structured way. They lend themselves in a near-automatic fashion to teleological accounts. This can partly account for the stronger counter-reaction to traditional biography writing in the history of the natural sciences than that of the humanities.

Common to biographies of scholars—be they natural scientists or humanists—is that many define a central episode or discuss a main interest. In Åkerblad's case this would be his involvement in the decipherment of the Egyptian scripts. He was an early protagonist in the decipherment, one of the most famous episodes in the disciplines now called Egyptology and orientalism. But Åkerblad did not see this as central to his life in the way we do with hindsight. To construct a life with teleological perspectives is inherent in the genre.

One of the reasons why the decipherment has gained such wide interest in both biography and general history is precisely because it mirrors the process of discovery in the natural sciences. Decipherment is a linguistic procedure that often requires substantial input from the study of history and literature. But compared to 'discovery' in many humanistic fields it is fairly easy to follow the process of decipherment; there are demonstrable advances and the result is an obvious, tangible, scientific triumph that begs for a teleological account. And, if that is not enough, many of the protagonists add drama, so that teleology merges with adventure. The investigation of the process that led to the reading of the Egyptian scripts lends itself well to a discussion of how the social history of science could be applied to the humanities.

The intention in this biography is to show an example of oriental studies in practice. Åkerblad is not representative—very few individual scholars are—but the role of the biography is rarely to be representative. Nevertheless, by following both his geographic and intellectual meanderings we will gain new insights into oriental and classical scholarship during this

Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-century England* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1994); Mario Biagioli, *Galileo, Courtier: The Practice of Science in the Culture of Absolutism* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1993).

⁶ Nevertheless, there is often an expressed ambivalence about biography in the natural sciences. Justification claims accompany doubts about the validity of the enterprise. On this count see several contributions in Thomas Söderqvist, ed., *The History and Poetics of Scientific Biography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

tumultuous period. A life of Åkerblad offers an additional picture of how knowledge of antiquity and the 'orient' was gained and may act as a corrective to oversimplified notions of the European engagement with the Eastern Mediterranean.

Another perspective that has been frequently underlined in the new directions in science history is the focus on institutions. In this context there are fewer differences between natural sciences and humanistic studies. Many of the new academies catered for all fields of knowledge studied at the time. Åkerblad became well aware of the importance of belonging to prestigious institutions of learning. It is not possible to understand how Åkerblad's career developed and how knowledge production changed without taking the contexts of learned societies, academies and universities into account. One of these important changes concerned universities. These were gaining in importance, and many disciplines were undergoing processes of specialisation and becoming increasingly defined as academic subjects. During his lifetime Åkerblad followed the changes that occurred in the fields of classical antiquity and oriental languages. Several of Åkerblad's disciplines were influenced by advances in taxonomy and classification developed in the natural sciences, for instance the disparate fields of numismatics and linguistics. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that Åkerblad's career is most easily understood in the context of the *ancien régime*. Even though the institutional landscape was changing he could not yet profit from the transformations and his career unfolded to a large extent in accordance with older models of scholarship within the system of individual patronage.

When writing about oriental studies, early European expansionism in the Middle East and Egyptian studies, one cannot avoid making reference to the debate on 'orientalism', and particularly Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Debating Said's and subsequent scholars' contributions has turned into an academic genre in itself (see p. 265ff.). What is clear to many observers is that the 'orientalism' debate often results in locking scholars into entrenched positions. Said's arguments have been eloquently summarized many times and my point here is not to refute Said's contention that orientalist were deeply involved in Europe's push eastwards. Several of the scholars mentioned in this book are used by Said as examples. We will see how they supported both the general goals of their countries as well as, in some cases, actively engaging in the war efforts of, for instance, France and Britain. These are also the two main countries Said focuses on in accordance with their pivotal role in the colonization of the Middle East. The history of oriental scholarship has at times focused on establishing

the complicity of scholars in the actions of their nations. This is not *per se* a difficult operation and Åkerblad could in many respects be blamed for supporting Sweden's policies that aimed to exploit its friendship with Turkey to keep its arch-enemy Russia at bay. But Sweden was unsuccessful and as a result Åkerblad's Swedish career foundered. Similar accusations may appear fairly uninteresting when they do not advance our understanding of how the actual 'orientalist' work was done. This book will try to find a middle ground between the mostly ideological interpretations *à la* Said and an overtly positivistic account of the development of linguistic and oriental studies.

Some scholars have even felt that both the name of the discipline, 'orientalism,' and the label for its practitioners, 'orientalists,' have become so tainted by negative connotations that they have introduced other words such as 'orientology' and 'orientologists.'⁷ But however one feels about 'orientalism,' much recent research has enhanced our knowledge. One example is the new historiography on the Ottoman Empire that has greatly nuanced our view of the interactions between Europe and the 'Orient.' The word 'Orient'—while it will be used throughout the book to designate the Middle East and Asia—is of course in itself a crude label for large and disparate cultural and historical areas, something that is also true for likewise imprecise designations such as 'Eastern' and 'European.'

The attempt here is to add another view of the history of European engagement with this region. What we need to know more about is not only why but also how oriental knowledge was acquired. Åkerblad's career offers another view of how such knowledge was gained.

The perspective is not only Swedish. Åkerblad spent more time as an active scholar in the Ottoman Empire, or in Italy, than in Sweden. The perspective can rather be defined as marginal, both in the sense of Åkerblad's difficult relationship with his origins as well as his subsequent failure to achieve his goals as an international scholar. Stockholm, Constantinople and Rome are not what we like to think of as scientific capitals. Nevertheless, throughout the book I have avoided framing my arguments in the guise of a centre-periphery dichotomy. By using such a framework we implicitly admit that there was a centre. The centrality of Paris for the period's

⁷ Vera Tolz, *Russia's own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in the Late Imperial and Early Soviet Periods* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010). For an example of the use of 'orientalism' for other geographic areas see p. 297.

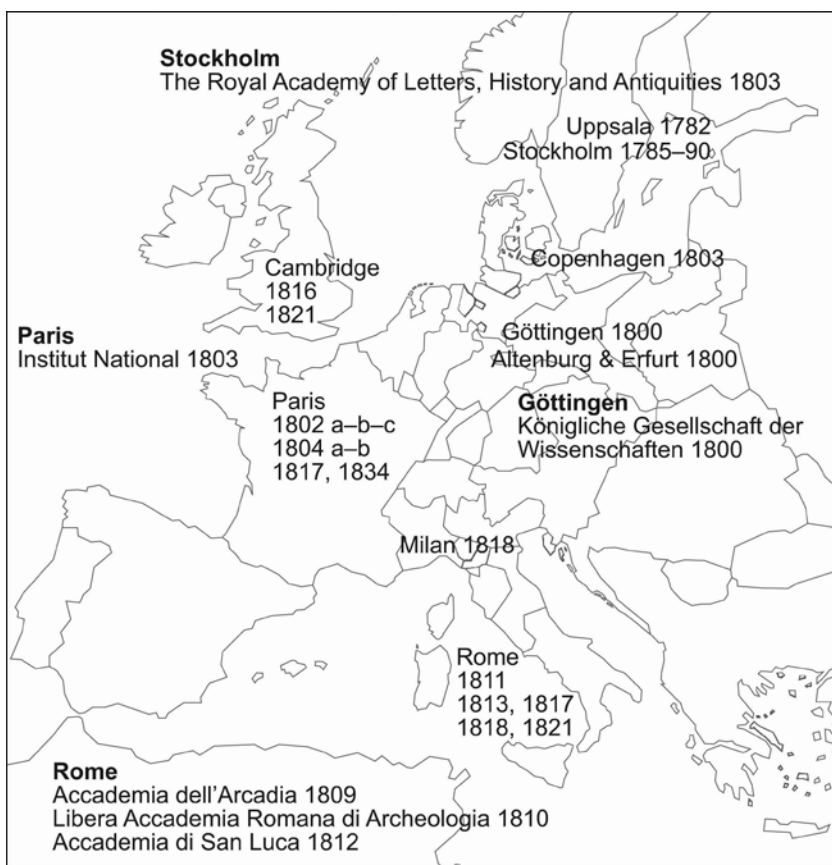


Figure 2. Åkerblad published in several places (the years and letters indicate publications) and languages: English, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Swedish. He was elected member of several academies (in the cities in bold type). The national borders are those negotiated at the Vienna congress in 1815, which re-established many of the states that had vanished since the early 1790s.

oriental studies has often been underlined—an assertion that has some relevance—but such ‘centrality’ is only maintained for brief and transient periods and the definition can very well impede us from seeing what was happening in other places. What this book hopefully makes abundantly clear is that there is great scope for the investigation of ‘orientalisms’ beyond the usual suspects of France, Britain and Germany (Figure 2).⁸

⁸ Such work is ongoing and will shortly produce results, see e.g. Suzanne L. Marchand’s introduction to her: *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and*

The main themes of the book relate to several of the above issues. Language, politics and the acquisition of oriental knowledge were central pre-occupations during Åkerblad's first decades in the Ottoman Empire. He quickly understood how the great powers of Britain, France and Russia fought for influence in the Mediterranean and beyond. He showed sympathy and understanding for his host country and had a high opinion of Ottoman and Arabic culture and traditions. He was not alone. The aim here is not to assert that there was general appreciation of, for instance, Turkish learning within the foreign community of diplomats, scholars and travellers. Nonetheless, it is likewise erroneous to maintain that there was only condescension for Turkish and Arabic culture (I use these labels for the sake of simplicity). Åkerblad and some of his colleagues cannot be used to confirm the widespread hypothesis of a process that was reducing the Near East to stereotypes.

Åkerblad's obsession with languages, living and extinct, shaped his life and career. He was not like some of his teachers back in Europe who were unable to speak the tongues they taught. He could freely communicate with the inhabitants of the places that he visited. But it was not only the living languages that held his interest. His interest in the development of writing systems and alphabets was crucial in his work with both Coptic manuscripts and the Rosetta inscription. During his travels in the East he had studied Phoenician inscriptions and with perseverance tracked different manners of writing the local languages and dialects. Åkerblad and many of his friends were well aware that the Eastern Mediterranean was a crucible of cultures. His Eastern Mediterranean was a different sea to that at the turn of the next century. Like many of the other themes this is directly connected to our changing ideas about orientalism and oriental studies. I will claim that Åkerblad's and some of his fellow scholars' views were different, less Hellenocentric and rigid, admitting a wider range of influences into the canon of Mediterranean history. The distinction between Greek and oriental was not as neat at this time as it later became.

Linguistic skills were not only of cultural and antiquarian concern, they were also highly politically charged. Åkerblad served as an interpreter in the Russo-Swedish war of 1788–90. The Russo-Anglo-French battles for

Scholarship (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009). Karla Mallette's *European Modernity and the Arab Mediterranean: Toward a New Philology and a Counter-Orientalism* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania UP, 2010) is an interesting attempt to discuss 'other orientalisms' such as Italian and Spanish studies of the Sicilian and Andalusian Arab periods.

supremacy in the Mediterranean that Åkerblad had witnessed in Constantinople led to war. In 1798 Åkerblad was invited to join the French army on its way to Egypt. With his exceptional knowledge of Arabic, Turkish and Modern Greek Åkerblad would have made an outstanding interpreter and scholar supporting the French invasion. Åkerblad refused, just as he had earlier refused invitations to join the British service.

Likewise the birth of modern Egyptology cannot be understood in a political vacuum. The finding of the Rosetta Stone and the systematic and large-scale scholarly interest in Egypt was a direct consequence of the invasion.

Åkerblad's interests were directed towards both the ancient and the contemporary cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. The political circumstances and how they influenced his work and career were directly connected to European expansion and the push eastwards. His first journeys were made to advance his own scholarly interests—but he justified them as necessary for maintaining and promoting Swedish trade and presence in the Mediterranean. Sweden never took any serious part in extra-European colonialism, not for the lack of want, but that is another story. Nevertheless, Åkerblad's life cannot be understood outside the framework of an increasing European interest in the East. Politics were also an important factor influencing his years in Italy. Travel and communications were difficult during the wars and the conditions for scholarly work changed radically once the French Empire fell and papal power was restored.

Åkerblad's origin is another central theme. Nationality was important in many contexts. To be a Swede competing with French and British scholars and academicians was difficult. The race to decipher the Egyptian scripts proves that oriental studies did not develop on a level playing field. Åkerblad's complicated relationship with his native country also influenced his reputation in Sweden.

Outline of the Book

The first part, *The making of a diplomat and orientalist*, treats Åkerblad's education, his initial diplomatic career and travels in the East. The aim is to give a broad background to what influenced both his political and scholarly choices and interests. In 1783 he was sent to Constantinople to finish his education as an interpreter in the Swedish Foreign Service. After a short time in Turkey he was fluent in Turkish, Arabic and Modern Greek.

His years of travelling in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa are described. He returned to Europe in the spring of 1789.

The second part, *1789–1801: Revolution and turmoil*, focuses on the decade following the French Revolution. Passing Paris in the spring of 1789 Åkerblad missed the July events. Åkerblad was initially an enthusiastic observer of the change in France. The fall of the French monarchy had immediate effects in both Constantinople and Stockholm. Sweden entered a period of political instability. Åkerblad was posted twice to Constantinople, first in 1791–93 and again in 1795–97. Released from duty in Constantinople in 1797 he went to Italy to study Coptic. He lived in Rome during the French invasion and the short-lived Roman Republic of 1798–99. In 1800 he was back in Stockholm. He went to Paris in 1801 as a private scholar to pursue his oriental studies. He would never return to Sweden.

The third part, *Reading Egyptian: deciphering the Rosetta inscriptions*, gives a detailed account of Åkerblad's Egyptian investigations. His entire work with the Rosetta inscription from 1802–16 as well as his continued Coptic and Egyptian research is treated. This section also contains a discussion on orientalism and the place of early Egyptology in the history of oriental studies.

The fourth part chronicles Åkerblad's years during *The Napoleonic wars and Restoration in Italy*. These were years of studies and fierce polemics in both political and scholarly affairs, often involving the French occupation power. Åkerblad had a large circle of acquaintances and was a magnet for scholars with oriental interests in Rome. Like many scholars Åkerblad lived through difficult years after the restoration of papal power in 1814. When Rome again became a destination for international travel he started new excavations at the Forum Romanum with the support of foreign patrons.

Translations and Sources

When transcribing manuscripts I have followed the graphic conventions used by the writers as closely as possible, including frequent misspellings of Åkerblad's name (e.g. Okreblann and Ackerblåd). All translations are made by me unless otherwise stated. Personal names and placenames are given as in the manuscripts. I have, for instance, chosen to retain the usage of Constantinople instead of Istanbul. A further geographic issue is the usage of names of countries that did not exist at the time of the events described. Italy was composed of ten different states before 1796

and Germany was divided into an array of entities. The Ottoman Empire was often called Turkey. Nonetheless, I often use the names Germany, Turkey and Italy, just as many people from the period did.

There are few obvious translations of Swedish titles and positions into English; the same is true of the different departments and functions of the foreign administration. The first time such a title or function is mentioned the Swedish is given in brackets. The titles of Swedish diplomats can be confusing. There were envoys, ministers and heads of missions leading the Swedish missions abroad. During the time-span covered by the book the title of ‘ambassador’ was only used for the Swedish representative in Paris. Similarly, the administration of Swedish foreign affairs went through several changes and I will refer to it as the ‘foreign service.’⁹

Due to the large number of persons mentioned I do not refer to biographical dictionaries, years of birth and death, when known, are always noted in the index.

The archival and manuscript sources for Åkerblad are chronologically uneven. Some periods are well documented while there are several lacunae and sometimes entire years are blank. The most important manuscript sources are two notebooks held in the Vatican library.¹⁰ One of them in particular, the larger in size, is the main source for much of Åkerblad’s travels. It is a fascinating document but often difficult to interpret. Together with his personal correspondence this notebook, shelf mark *Vaticani latini* 9785, referred to below simply as ‘Vat. lat.,’ is the major source for understanding his readings and intellectual interests. Most illustrations of Åkerblad’s hand reproduced below are from this bigger notebook. The second notebook, Vat. lat. 9784, is smaller in format and was mainly used for noting down inscriptions and wordlists—especially Greek from Åkerblad’s travels in Ottoman Greece. Åkerblad wrote in a large number of languages and scripts; a tentative count exceeds twenty: Albanian, Aramaic, Arabic (various dialects), Coptic, Dutch, English, Ethiopic (Ge’ez and Amharic),

⁹ I have mainly adapted the translations from Sören Tommos, *The Diplomatica Collection in the Swedish National Archives* (Stockholm: Liber, 1980).

¹⁰ Vat. lat. 9785 (mm. 240 X 185, fols. 75) (hereafter Vat. lat.), the smaller Vat. lat. 9784 (mm. 152 X 100, fols. 85 but with many blank pages), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (hereafter BAV), Vatican City, Rome. References are given fol. r[recto] and v[verso]. On 9785 see my: “Between Rome and the Orient: Johan David Åkerblad’s (1763–1819) notebook *Vat. lat.* 9785,” *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae* 18 (2011): 497–516; Marco Buonocore, *Tra i codici epigrafici della Biblioteca apostolica vaticana* (Ravenna: Fratelli Lega, 2004), 137–39. Åkerblad’s notebooks were sold to the library in 1873 by G. Battista de Rossi as “Greek and Latin epigraphic notes and drawings of monuments and annotations from travels in the Orient by the learned Åkerblad,” fol. 183r, Arch. Bibl. 14, BAV.

Etruscan, French, German, Ancient Greek, Modern Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Kurdish, Persian, Phoenician, Portuguese, Spanish, Syriac, Swedish, Samaritan, Tatar, Turkish etc. It is impossible to date most of the entries in the notebooks and the larger Vat. lat. 7985, in particular, was used from the 1780s until Åkerblad's death.

We have a fair amount of Åkerblad's official correspondence from the decades when he worked in the foreign service, and personal letters written by him, especially from his time in Rome in 1809–19. Significantly, no correspondence *to* Åkerblad has been conserved. The Swedish consul in Rome wrote to Stockholm after having drafted Åkerblad's estate inventory:

It is however quite singular that among the papers of the said deceased [Åkerblad], except for a small part, everything else only regards correspondence with women, my opinion is that it should all be set aflame to avoid compromising *peace within various families*, and even *the honour of the persons* that have been imprudent enough to write, and to conserve documents of what should have been consecrated to the most rigorous silence.¹¹

It appears that the consul did burn the correspondence, and kept the notebooks that later became the property of his son (see p. 411). The few extant letters to Åkerblad are those conserved as drafts or copies in the collections of the senders. Some papers in Åkerblad's possession at the time of his death did survive, but these do not include any personal correspondence.¹² There are several indications that Åkerblad was not an assiduous collector of his own materials. In a letter to a friend he asked for a copy of his own manuscript destined for publication: "I pray you to send it to me and I will try to remake from memory what I think I ought to change in my diatribe, because I never keep my drafts."¹³ Likewise, when

¹¹ Pentini to Chancery Board, 15 May 1819, Rome, no. 973, vol. 66, *Skrivelser från konsul, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet*, The Swedish National Archives [Riksarkivet], Stockholm (hereafter SNA).

¹² Karl Piehl, "Quelques mots sur la vie et les œuvres de l'illustre orientaliste suédois J.-D.-Åkerblad," in *Actes du Huitième Congrès International des Orientalistes Tenu en 1889 à Stockholm et à Christiania, Section Africaine* (Leiden, 1892), 59–65. The papers in the National Library of Sweden [Kungliga Biblioteket], Stockholm (hereafter KB), consist of Åkerblad's Coptic dictionary N71, notes on inscriptions, readings, printing proofs etc. N72. N71a is Åkerblad's print of the Demotic part of the Rosetta inscription. For the only extant 'letter' to Åkerblad see figure 58 and plate 31.

¹³ JDÅ to Friedrich Münter, 27 March 1801, Stockholm, in *Frederik Münter: Et Mindeskrift*, ed. Øjvind Andreassen, 7 vols. (Copenhagen: P. Haase & Sohn, Otto Harassowitz, 1925–49), 5:6 (hereafter *Münter*).

asked to comment upon his Rosetta publication he admitted that: “I do not have a single copy . . . in Italy.”¹⁴

Table 1. Chronology of the life of Åkerblad

1763	Born 6 May in Stockholm
1778	Enrols at Uppsala University, studies oriental languages with Carl Aurivillius
1782	Graduates with a thesis on a historical subject with Erik Michael Fant
1783	Appointed <i>Jeune de langue</i> to Constantinople, travels through Germany and Italy
1784	Arrives in March in Constantinople
1785	Travels in the Greek archipelago and intensive language studies
1786–89	Travels in the Eastern Mediterranean: Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, Cyprus, Egypt, Tunis etc.
1789	Returns to Sweden via Paris and London, serves in the Russo-Swedish war, appointed Turkish translator
1791	Second posting to Constantinople, travels through Germany, spends two months in Vienna
1792	Travels in Turkey and the Greek archipelago
1793	To Stockholm through the Balkans, Austria, Germany
1795	Third posting to Constantinople, travels via Paris, Marseille, Livorno
1797	Leaves Constantinople for the last time, travels in Turkey and Greece
1798	In Rome from February 1798 to May 1799, travels in Italy, Coptic studies
1798	Invited to participate in the French invasion of Egypt
1799	Travels in Italy, discovers a runic inscription on Greek marble lion in Venice
1800	Publishes on the location of Troy and criticizes archaeological looting in Greece. January to April in Göttingen, elected member of the Göttingen academy, in Stockholm in May
1800–1	Last year in Stockholm, Phoenician studies
1801–2	Private scholar in Paris
1802	Publishes on Coptic script, a Phoenician inscription and the Rosetta inscription
1802	Secretary at the Swedish mission in The Hague, elected to the Stockholm Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (KVHAA)
1803	Elected to the <i>Institut National</i> in Paris, secretary at the Swedish mission in Paris

¹⁴ JDÅ to Sebastiano Ciampi, 2 February 1815, Rome, Sebastiano Ciampis samling, Acc 1828, The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities [Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien], Stockholm (hereafter KVHAA).

Table 1 (*cont.*)

1804	<i>Charges d'affaires</i> in Paris, leaves France in September
1805	Travels in Switzerland and Italy
1806–7	Rome
1807–8	Florence
1809	Settles in Rome
1809–12	Elected member of several Roman academies: Archaeological, Arcadia, San Luca
1810–11	Åkerblad's Egyptian <i>Mémoire. Sur les noms coptes</i> ... is read at the <i>Institut National</i> in Paris but not published
1811	Archaeologist at the Forum, discovery of the <i>Via Sacra</i>
1811	Publishes on Greek inscriptions, notes that Greek sculpture was painted
1812–15	Correspondence with Champollion on Coptic and Egyptian matters
1813	Publishes on Greek curse tablets
1814	French defeat and end of occupation of Rome, economic hardships
1814–16	Correspondence with Thomas Young on the Demotic script
1816–18	Archaeologist at the Forum, under patronage of Elizabeth Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire
1817	Publishes on Phoenician inscription
1819	Dies in Rome 8 February, buried at the <i>Cimitero acattolico</i>

PART ONE

THE MAKING OF A DIPLOMAT AND ORIENTALIST

CHAPTER ONE

FAMILY AND EDUCATION

Johan David Åkerblad was born on 6 May 1763 in Stockholm. His father Johan Åkerblad (1727–99) was a mirror-maker. The family was prosperous enough to own a house in central Stockholm and send one of three sons to university. Åkerblad's mother, Anna Magdalena Lenngren, was born in 1732. He had an older sister, Johanna Christina, who was born in 1761 and two younger brothers, Eric Emanuel and Timotheus, who were born in 1765 and 1768 respectively. The birth of Timotheus almost cost his mother her life. She died in November 1776 after a long illness when Johan David was 13 years old. His father would later remarry.

The Åkerblad family belonged to the Christian pietist Herrnhut community, the Moravians, in Stockholm. The Herrnhut community facilitated the mixing of classes and professions more than most other contexts of contemporary Stockholm social life. It was not a large community; during the 1760s it had less than 200 members, a figure which increased to around 500 in the 1790s.¹ The professions of craftsman, merchant, civil servant and priest were common within the community. Åkerblad met Carl Christoffer Gjörwell (1731–1811) through the Herrnhut community. Gjörwell, who had a great influence on Åkerblad, was one of the most important Stockholm cultural figures of the second half of the century. He published periodicals and a range of both Swedish works and translations of foreign authors; he also tried to produce a Swedish encyclopaedia based on the French model. His ventures sent him into bankruptcy twice.

Åkerblad matriculated at Uppsala University on 1 October 1778, at the age of 15. At this time there were no institutions of higher education in Stockholm, and Uppsala was the obvious destination for all aspiring students from central and northern Sweden. Åkerblad joined the university after the blooming of the sciences that peaked around the middle of the century. The number of students, which had been close to 800 around 1750, dropped to less than 500 during the 1780s. Theological studies were still dominant; at the end of the century around 40 percent of the students became priests.

Uppsala was the only place in Sweden with a more or less continuous tradition of teaching oriental languages. Interest in these languages

¹ Arne Jarrick, *Den himmelske älskaren* (Stockholm: Ordfront, 1987).

began in the period immediately after the Reformation, in a quest for new interpretations of biblical and religious texts free from the influence of the Catholic Church. This required study of the original texts and also resulted in a growing focus on their linguistic and historic contexts. The main subject was Hebrew. The 1626 Uppsala University constitutions specify that the professor of Hebrew was also required to teach the basics of Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic. It was, however, not uncommon for there to be great gulfs between university constitutions and the actual teaching that occurred. The quality of the teaching was dependent on the proficiency and dedication of each professor, and the subject suffered from long periods of difficulties. The teaching of Hebrew and other oriental languages was closely connected to biblical studies although it was formally an independent subject. In spite of this, the rules demanded that as soon as any religious matter was referred to, which evidently also included scant references to the Bible, the matter was to be discussed under the authority of the Theological faculty. The great majority of students were future clergymen who needed Greek and Hebrew to pass their exams.

Åkerblad studied with professor of oriental languages Carl Aurivillius (1717–1786). Aurivillius himself had studied in Uppsala before spending three years abroad, 1741–44, in search of the most authoritative teachers in his field. He had studied with Christian Benedikt Michaelis in Halle, with Étienne Fourmont in Paris and with Albert Schultens in Leiden. After contact with three of the most important scholars of the first half of the century he was left well aware of the major directions that the studies of oriental languages were heading toward. Aurivillius' 1747 thesis dealt with the possibilities of using Arab dialects in support of Hebrew philology and was inspired by the work of Schultens.² Aurivillius also knew Turkish; he had probably taught himself.

Aurivillius maintained his contact with foreign scholars. One of these was Christian Benedikt Michaelis' son, Johann David (1717–1791), who made his career at the recently founded University of Göttingen. Aurivillius and Michaelis corresponded when Aurivillius returned to Sweden. Aurivillius published a study on the Arabic cosmographer Ibn al-Wardī (d. 1348/9) in 1752.³ His work was seriously hampered by the lack of Arabic typefaces

² Carl Aurivillius, *Disputatio philologica de usu dialecti arabicae in indaganda vocum ebraicarum significatione propria & originaria* (Uppsala, 1747).

³ Letters in: J. D. Michaelis, *Literarischer Briefwechsel: Geordnet und herausg. von Joh. Gottlieb Buhle*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1794–96); Aurivillius, *Ex opere cosmographico Ibn Alvardi particula latine versa et illustrata notis* (Uppsala, 1752).

and he was unable to continue printing an edition in Uppsala. Michaelis appreciated Aurivillius' work and wanted to help; he wrote to his colleague in 1756 offering to continue the printing in Germany.⁴ The situation remained unchanged fifty years later and Åkerblad was compelled to print in France rather than in Sweden because of the lack of typefaces and high costs.

Michaelis' opinion of Aurivillius was a flattering one: "The life of a great man in the Oriental languages, at least the greatest in his time in Sweden, and a man that possibly did not have his like in Germany because of his very wide philological knowledge." Michaelis also rhetorically asked why Aurivillius was not as famous as the Swedish astronomer Anders Celsius, inventor of the eponymous temperature scale. The Swedish lack of appreciation for sciences other than the natural was noted abroad. Michaelis saw to it that the dissertations under Aurivillius' supervision were reprinted in Germany. Aurivillius himself published little, due to both lack of time and the difficulties in printing oriental languages at Uppsala, something his son also pointed out in defence of his father's meagre publication record. Aurivillius not only dedicated himself to the study of classical and biblical texts, he also introduced his students to modern literature.⁵

Åkerblad did not choose languages as a main subject, even though they do seem to have been his principal occupation during the Uppsala years. Considering Åkerblad's linguistic talents he surely knew Latin and Greek before arriving at Uppsala. Instead he studied history with Erik Mikael Fant. The prevailing custom at Uppsala was that the professor would write a thesis which the student would defend at a public disputation. Fant was probably the author of the thesis that Åkerblad defended on 17 December 1782. It consisted of a brief exposition of the international connections and treaties entered into by King Gustav I (c. 1496–1560).⁶

Aurivillius also acted as Arabic and Turkish translator for the state, a fact that was important for Åkerblad's career. Documents and letters which arrived in Stockholm from Constantinople and the Barbary states were forwarded to Aurivillius in Uppsala for translation. A great deal of

⁴ Michaelis to Aurivillius, 26 November 1756, G 4 b, UUL.

⁵ J. D. Michaelis, *Neue orientalische und exegetische Bibliothek*, 8 vols. (Göttingen, 1786–91), 5:72; *Caroli Aurivillii . . . Dissertationes ad sacras literas et philologiam orientalem pertinentes. Cum praefatione Joannis Dav. Michaelis. . .* (Göttingen, 1790); P. F. Aurivillii biografi öfver sin fader, X 251 b, UUL.

⁶ Åkerblad, *Primis Sueciae, Sub R. Gustavo 1., Extra Septentrionem Initis Foederibus* (Uppsala, 1782), 19 pages.

communication was needed to maintain peaceful relationships with the Ottoman North African provinces in order to protect Swedish shipping in the Mediterranean. Aurivillius' knowledge of Turkish, together with his Arabic and his insights into its dialects, made him one of the very few persons to meet the requirements of the state and he was appointed official translator in 1765. This role came in addition to his obligations at the university. One of the duties associated with this office was to train a young student in Arabic and Turkish, which Aurivillius did with zeal:

through six years of daily lessons [Aurivillius] trained a student named Pehr Grandel in the Turkish language and, after he died, another student named Schindler in Arabic, who was sent out to replace the former, and finally, upon Schindler's death, J. D. Åkerblad was trained in Turkish and sent out as a replacement.⁷

Åkerblad was a proficient student. Aurivillius' teaching and access to the collections of both manuscripts and printed works in Uppsala and Stockholm combined to make him a well-versed oriental language scholar in a few years.

Some of Åkerblad's later correspondents are most probably friends made during his studies in Uppsala, e.g. the botanist Olof Swartz (1760–1818). Swartz left Sweden in 1783 on a voyage to the Americas and the West Indies which resulted in major contributions to the knowledge of American flora. This was only a few months before Åkerblad left for his first posting to Constantinople. When Swartz returned to Sweden he became president [preses] of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences [Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien] in Stockholm and pursued a distinguished official scientific career.

Upon graduating Åkerblad went back to Stockholm where he worked with oriental manuscripts in the royal collections. Had he had the economic means he probably would have considered the possibility of continuing his studies abroad. His application to the government in February 1783 for a position in the foreign service was based on opportunity:

As I have heard from Mr Envoy Celsing, His Majesty's Jeune de Langue Schindler has perished in Constantinople and as I have for some time studied Turkish and the other oriental languages I most humbly request that Your Excellence might most graciously consider me if the said position is to be filled.⁸

⁷ P. F. Aurivillii biografi öfver sin fader, fol. 7, X 251 b, UUL.

⁸ No date, Aurivillius' enclosed certificate is dated 4 February, Kanslitjänstemäns ämbetsmemorial mm samt ansökningar, allmän serie, 1710–1800, Kanslikollegium, SNA.

Åkerblad had met with Ulric Celsing, former Swedish envoy in Constantinople and brother of the previous envoy, Gustaf Celsing. The Celsing brothers had been instrumental in creating and maintaining close relations between Sweden and Turkey over several decades. Åkerblad had made a favourable impression on Celsing who later expressed his admiration for the younger man's exceptional ability to speak oriental languages.⁹ Åkerblad supplemented his application with a certificate from Aurivillius that lauded his progress in Turkish.

Åkerblad was the next of Aurivillius' pupils in line for the position of *Jeune de Langue* in Constantinople, the name for the young officials who were posted there to learn languages and later serve as translators and interpreters. Aurivillius endorsed Åkerblad's application underlining the need for encouragement and financial support—he had personal experience of the difficulties of learning oriental languages in Sweden.

Gerhard Johan Baltasar von Heidenstam, the new Constantinople head of mission appointed in 1783, had written to the authorities in Stockholm to request that a new Swedish *Jeune de Langue* be sent: "If therefore an obedient, good mannered, reasonable and knowledgeable youth will be sent here, . . . he should in a few years be able to surpass the present Dragomans in both zeal and skilfulness."¹⁰ The dragomans, the official interpreters employed by both the Ottoman government and foreign missions, were key figures in the contact between the missions and their Ottoman counterparts. Heidenstam, who had already spent a decade in Constantinople, added to the wish list: "But the main thing is that he should not be too young, nor have lived too much in the wider world, lest it will be impossible to accustom him to the Country."

Åkerblad passed the compulsory exam to enter state service and was employed as extraordinary clerk in the Royal Foreign Secretariat [*Kongliga Utrikes Expeditionen*] in February 1783. On 20 October the same year the Chancery Board [*Kanslikollegium*] decided to disburse travel funds for the newly appointed *Jeune de Langue* Åkerblad.¹¹

⁹ Ulric Gustaf Franc to Johan Albrekt Ehrenström, 16 September 1789, fol. 19, X 241, UUL.

¹⁰ Heidenstam dispatch, 25 July 1783, Turcica 61, SNA.

¹¹ 11, 24 February, 20 October 1783, *Kanslikollegium* protokoll, SNA. A letter of approval from the king of 22 September is cited.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSTANTINOPLE—CITY OF RUMOURS

Åkerblad left for Constantinople in October or early November 1783. It should be kept in mind that he was only twenty years old when he set out for his first posting abroad. He described his trip through Germany and Italy in a letter to Gjörwell dated July 1784, a few months after his arrival in Constantinople in March. This is the only account we have of Åkerblad's first encounter with continental Europe. He was equipped with letters of recommendation which gave him access to the scholars that particularly interested him. Åkerblad introduced what would become a recurrent theme in his letters before summarily describing the first leg of his journey: "At first I was quite worried by the inadequacy of my travelling funds but the imagined pleasure of being able to go places and see things soon made me take my decision."¹ Yet even if Åkerblad repeatedly complained of financial difficulties, he nonetheless continued to travel incessantly for more than twenty years, and almost always with little money.

Åkerblad's first stop in Germany was Göttingen. The town was a frequent destination for Swedish students and scholars. The Georg-August University had opened in 1737 and had rapidly become important both to Swedish noblemen and the traditional Swedish students abroad, theologians and medical students. The university quickly became renowned for its secularized organisation; the theological faculty did not occupy the same central position as in many other universities. It was also adept at marketing its own excellence.² On arrival Åkerblad visited one of its most famous professors:

In Göttingen I visited Sir Michaëlis who showed me much courtesy. I could not then with certainty tell him what I am now quite sure of, which is that I will in a couple of years undertake the same trip that the late Björnståhl had planned in Syria, Egypt, Barbary etcetera. In the eventuality that I did make the trip he asked my permission to send me questions, which I willingly gave him.³

¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 24 July 1784, no. 63, Ep G 7:12, KB.

² William Clark, *Academic Charisma and the Origins of the Research University* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2006).

³ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 24 July 1784, no. 63, Ep G 7:12, KB.

Oriental languages were among several subjects taught by Johann David Michaelis. Michaelis was one of a growing group of scholars that took a partly secular view of Christian texts, viewing the Bible as a literary text open to both philological and historical investigation. He was also the main inspiration behind the Danish Arabia Felix expedition led by Carsten Niebuhr. Michaelis had prepared a list of questions that was to accompany the expedition headed for the Arabian peninsula. The complete questionnaire was published in 1762 in a volume of over 400 pages. Although Michaelis' questionnaire belongs to a genre of 'instructions for travellers' it is exceptional even in the context of such manuals. The preface underlines the importance of learning languages in their spoken context and of collecting information at source. The epoch of library orientalisks was drawing to a close. Michaelis' request that Åkerblad take a new questionnaire on his oriental journey should be understood in the context of these earlier examples.

The Arabia Felix questions are a telling testimony to the available knowledge on Arabian matters. Michaelis' intentions, supposedly initially to investigate the origins of Judaism and Christianity through the knowledge and customs preserved on the Arabian peninsula, had widened as the array of questions testify: *About castration* [158]; *On the medicinal benefits of the circumcision of boys and girls* [152]; *About the signs of virginity after the wedding* [163]; *If the poison of certain snakes can be of benefit?* [205]; *Of maladies that prevent the plague* [207]; *About Northern Lights and the nature of the air in Arabia* [244]; *How are the Turks regarded in Arabia after the surprise attack on Aden of Suleiman II?*; *Do they pay tribute?* [376].⁴

A commonly held view of the development of oriental studies is that they were decoupled from theological studies at around this time and became secularized. This is a somewhat simplified narrative; it would be more correct to say that theological and secularized studies existed side-by-side and often overlapped.⁵ Åkerblad was, as we will see, mainly interested in the secular aspects, but he was nevertheless well aware of

⁴ J. D. Michaelis, *Fragen an eine Gesellschaft gelehrter Männer, die auf Befehl Ihrer Majestät des Königes von Dänemark nach Arabien reisen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1762), lxviii, 397 pages. In French London, 1768, and Amsterdam, 1774; in Dutch Amsterdam, 1774. The page numbers refer to the German edition of 1762. Ulrich Hübner, "Johann David Michaelis und die Arabien-Expedition 1761–1767," in *Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815) und seine Zeit: Beiträge eines interdisziplinären Symposiums vom 7.–10. Oktober 1999 in Eutin*, ed. Josef Wiesehöfer and Stephan Conermann (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2002).

⁵ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, xxvi.

the importance of both his predecessors and the long theological history of the discipline.

An earlier Swedish traveller, Jacob Jonas Björnståhl (1731–1779), had also been instructed to obtain answers to Michaelis' questions. Björnståhl was of humble origins and had studied to become a priest. He became fascinated early on by Greek and oriental languages, especially Hebrew. In order to pursue his studies he had left Sweden in 1767 as a private tutor for two young noble brothers. During his twelve years abroad Björnståhl had met many European scholars and celebrities. His descriptions of encounters with, among others, Voltaire, Rousseau and Diderot are classics in Swedish travel writing. The letters he wrote were edited and published by Gjörwell in Swedish in 1780–84 and became a minor European success. He had spent a couple of years in Constantinople and had been about to set out on an oriental journey when he died in Ottoman Greece in 1779.⁶

That Michaelis wanted to include Åkerblad in his network of correspondents shows how he was already, at this early stage, integrated in the learned exchange, even if this was implicitly based on future contributions. When Åkerblad arrived in Göttingen his plans for travelling in the Orient were already well-defined.

Åkerblad continued southwards: "In Germany I stayed only briefly, in Italy somewhat longer. I was in Rome at the same time as His Majesty the King and I was also granted the honour of being presented to him (Figure 3). Then I took the road over Livorno and Smyrna to here, where I arrived around four months ago."⁷

The one notice we are furnished with from Rome is the meeting with the king. The role of Gustav III (1746–1792) in politics and cultural life during his 21-year reign is a constantly debated issue in Swedish historiography.⁸ After he came to power in 1771 fundamental changes were introduced. During the so-called Age of Liberty [Frihetstiden] of 1719–72 the monarch's power was curtailed by parliament [Riksdag] formed by members of the following Estates: the nobility, the clergy, the burghers and a fourth Estate comprised of land-owning peasants. This power sharing was put to

⁶ Kanslikollegiums instruction 27 november 1778, Betyg m.m. 22, Björnståhl I, Lund University Library; Christian Callmer, "Jacob Jonas Björnståhl," in *Callmer*, 61–124; Jacob Jonas Björnståhl, *Resa til Frankrike, Italien, Sweitz, Tyskland, Holland, England, Turkiet, och Grekland: beskrifven af och efter Jac. Jon. Björnståhl*, 6 vols. (Stockholm, 1780–84). In German 1777–83, Dutch 1778–84, 1792, Italian 1782–87.

⁷ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 24 July 1784, no. 63, Ep G 7:12, KB.

⁸ Among the more interesting recent titles is Erik Lönnroth's *Den stora rollen: Kung Gustaf III spelad av honom själv* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1986, repr. 2008).



Figure 3. Bénigne Gagneraux. Gustav III visits the Vatican Museum with Pope Pius VI. The two black-frokked young men on the left are the brothers Ennio Quirino and Filippo Aurelio Visconti whom Åkerblad would later befriend in Paris and Rome. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

an end by the king who changed the constitution in August 1772, after a *coup d'état*. The king re-established rule centred on royal authority and Åkerblad was surely aware of the merits of ingratiating himself with the king to obtain favours. The role of the king was pervasive in almost all affairs of state. The bureaucracy which had emerged during the Age of Liberty was changed by the king. Some observers claim that Gustav III acted *de facto* as foreign minister, both by supervising all correspondence and by taking all major decisions.⁹ While the attention given to him in Swedish history often appears exaggerated it must be acknowledged that he greatly influenced both cultural and political life. The king's influence will not be explicitly discussed below, but the fact remains that Åkerblad and his contemporaries knew all too well that the king's decisions could make or break a career. To have a good relationship with the king and his courtiers was necessary for Åkerblad and his colleagues, irrespective of whether they were employed in foreign service, at universities or trying to make a living as independent scholars and literary men. An important

⁹ Olof Jägerskiöld, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia. II:2, 1721–1792* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1957): 243–44, 248.

measure immediately introduced by the king after the coup of 1772 was the curtailing of the comparatively extensive freedom of the press that had characterized the 1760s; censorship would become increasingly strict during his reign.

Åkerblad's comments in his letters to Gjörwell were usually guarded; it is unclear to what extent Åkerblad nurtured scepticism towards the monarchy at this stage. However, it would have been inappropriate to address any negative comments to Gjörwell, since the former royal librarian never lost his faith in the monarchy.

The king and his entourage's Italian sojourn is a much discussed episode in Swedish cultural history. The results were important: antiquities were bought, especially sculpture. This collection later formed the nucleus of an antiquity museum in the Stockholm royal castle which opened in 1794. One of the many visits made by the royal Swedish company while in Rome was to the *Congregazione della Propaganda Fide*. The *Propaganda Fide* was the main Roman institution for both the diffusion of religious texts in foreign languages and for the teaching of missionaries. A Swedish nobleman with poetical tendencies was instructed to write a celebratory poem when the printing shop received a royal visit.

The poem was printed in 45 languages to flaunt the linguistic printing capabilities of the *Propaganda*. The text of the poem in the English version bears little resemblance to the Swedish original and many of the other translations are haphazard (Figure 4). When J. D. Michaelis learnt about the visit to the printing shop he noticed with surprise that the king had not used it to acquire Arabic typefaces for use at Uppsala University.

Åkerblad left Italy by ship from Livorno and disembarked on 16 March 1784, arriving in a city full of rumours. He had sailed on the French corvette *La Badine*, boarding at Smyrna to complete the last leg to the capital. In the same dispatch that announced Åkerblad's arrival, the Swedish head of mission Heidenstam made it clear that the city was a virtual playing field for the ambitions of the great powers:

Baron Herbert and the French Ambassador are also often engaged in secret conversations with each other. The last French [mail] brought messages that seem to be of importance; at least the Ambassador has been incessantly occupied since its arrival. ... The said war ship spent last summer in the harbors of the Archipelago, so to speak without purpose, and aroused here the suspicion that France in due time, in the case of an additional breaking up of the Ottoman Empire, is to take possession of some Greek islands. The

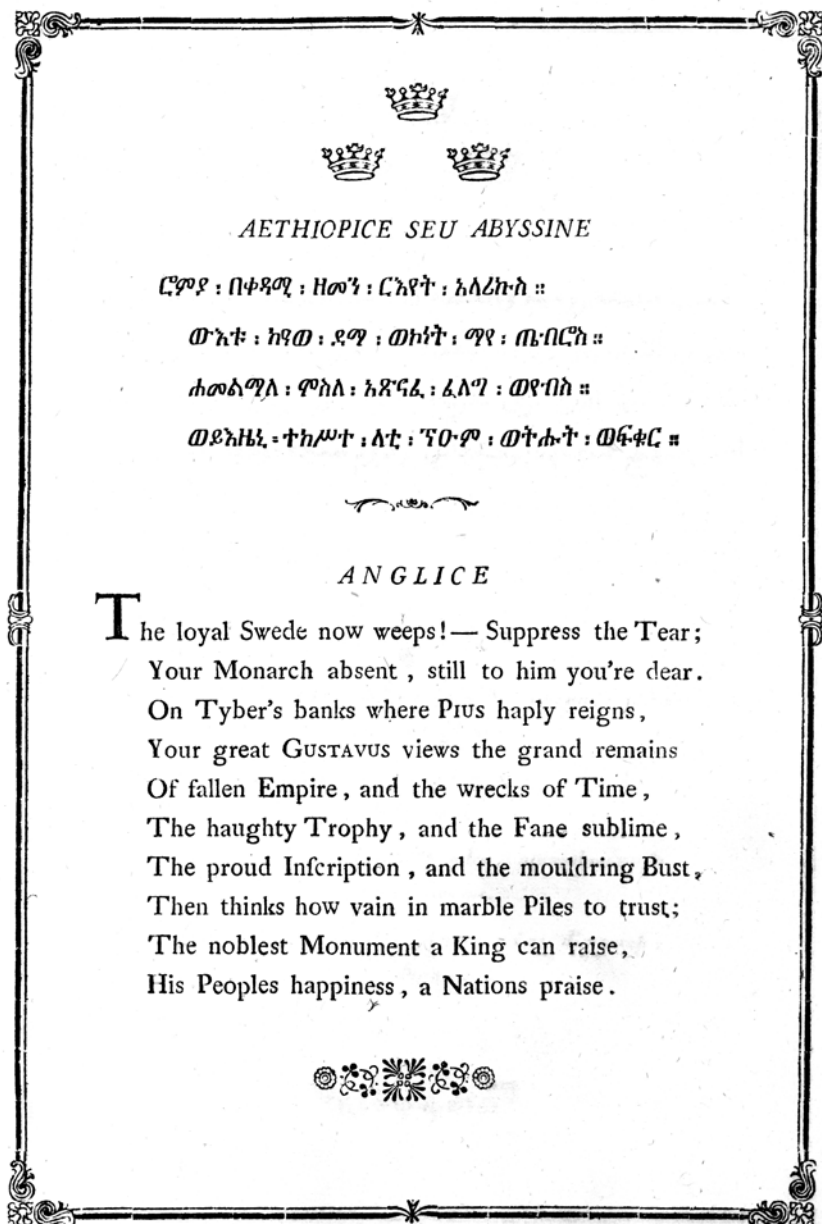


Figure 4. Multilingual album celebrating the king's visit to the *Propaganda Fide*.
Regi Gustavo regis Federici filio Suecis Gothis Vandalis imperanti... (Rome, 1784),

2. UUL.

moment the real intentions of the Emperor will be revealed is waited upon with anxiety.¹⁰

La Badine had sailed in the archipelago since the previous summer and many observers suspected that French intentions in relation to Ottoman sovereignty were all but benign. Heidenstam was generally well-informed about the political events in the city. Sweden was not a major actor, but as the relationship with Russia was a constant Swedish concern, the situation of the Ottoman Empire was of importance to Swedish interests. The common enemy Russia helped to maintain Swedish interest in Turkish affairs. The Ottoman Empire was alternatively seen as an ally against Russia and as a nation that could deflect Russian interest from Swedish territories. During Åkerblad's early postings Swedish attention towards Turkey grew. Gaining Turkish support and subsidies was an important foreign policy goal of the king.

The most recent of a series of Russo-Turkish wars, that of 1768–74, was not forgotten. The Ottoman state had lost considerable territories to Russia and had had to give up total control of shipping in the Black Sea. Heidenstam's dispatch dealt with a range of issues in a few lines: Would the Ottoman Empire be able to resist the ambitions of other nations in respect to its territories or was the further carving up of its dominions to be expected in the near future? What were the real intentions of the diplomats in Constantinople? What did military presence entail? The expression 'gunboat diplomacy' was not yet coined, but the presence of foreign naval forces could not be taken lightly. Heidenstam continued:

The Grand Vizier does not believe that disinterest is the mainspring of highly born Gentlemen, and consequently takes measures; but he is alone, envied and badly supported by a weak Master. The common opinion here seems to be that the Viennese court's close relationship with the Russian court aims to gain future advantages in the relationship with the German realm.

The Grand Vizier did not believe that the foreigners were motivated by unselfishness in their actions. It is possible to sympathise with such a view in retrospect. The Grand Vizier was the Ottoman state's highest official and could, in principle, only be dismissed by the sultan himself. The Vizier Halil Hamid Pasha, in office from December 1782 to April 1785, was executed after having been accused of taking part in a conspiracy to

¹⁰ Heidenstam's dispatch, 27 March 1784, Turcica 61, SNA. Peter Philipp von Herbert-Rathkeal (1735–1802) Austrian internonce (same rank as ambassador) to the Sublime Porte.

depose the sultan Abdul Hamid I, his “weak Master” as Heidenstam put it. Åkerblad saw his decapitated head and copied the sign that was hung beside it.¹¹

France’s intentions were difficult to assess. The diplomatic community competed by presenting the Porte and, sometimes, also its fellow missions with the most lavish gifts, all according to the political constellation of the moment as Heidenstam underlined:

The Russian gifts have attracted great attention from the Porte, where they are considered a kind of handsome bribe. One seems to be especially discontented by the fact that the French Ambassador has accepted such gifts; something the Grand Vizier has made clear to me in no indistinct terms.

The rumours held that the French were ready to sail into the Black Sea against Turkish will; something Heidenstam did not believe they planned to do. In January 1786 a Russian warship took refuge in the Bosphorus to escape bad weather, but rumours implied that they had come intentionally to spy.¹² The Russians would probably have regarded any French attempt to gain access to the Black Sea as a *casus belli*. Heidenstam and his foreign colleagues frequently discussed the Russian presence in Constantinople. In Constantinople’s diplomatic community of the 1780s Russian expansionist intentions was an encompassing preoccupation.

The aspirations of the major European nations were clearly perceived, both by the local government and by the international community. Laments about living conditions in the city were common among members of the diplomatic community. The social life was less brilliant than in many European capitals and the constant threat of the plague limited freedom of movement. Life in the foreign community of Constantinople revolved around two centres; firstly, the relationship with the Sublime Porte, that is the government and foreign policies of the Ottoman state; secondly, the life of the western diplomatic community (Figure 5). The ‘Sublime Porte’ refers to one of the gates, the *Bab-ı Âli*, still in existence, leading into the palace area in Constantinople. It is thus similar to the concept of ‘court,’ another spatial description for the place of power. The impact of the intricacies of Constantinople life was echoed in Åkerblad’s first letter to Gjörwell, four months after his arrival. Åkerblad introduced many themes which would recur in his letters:

¹¹ Vat. lat., fol. 14v.

¹² Joseph Gabriel Monnier de Courtois, diary entry, 4 January 1786, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vailland, Bourg-en-Bresse.

This early premonition concerning his career within the foreign service would later prove to be correct. He had only spent a few months at his first foreign posting and already worried whether the knowledge he was acquiring would ever be of service to the state, and if it could further his promotion within the service. The requirements of state service would always be difficult to combine with Åkerblad's intentions and plans. The conditions were often quite harsh and the political situation both within the mission and in the wider diplomatic community was difficult for a person of Åkerblad's age and experience to handle.

Åkerblad immediately began to perfect his knowledge of Turkish and Arabic. This initial thrust would be repeated throughout his life each time he arrived in a new place. The Swedish mission was unusual in the sense that several of its envoys had learnt enough Turkish to be able to conduct work without the presence of interpreters. Both Celsing brothers had some proficiency in Turkish and Heidenstam, who had worked at the mission since 1774, also knew enough to be able to communicate with Turkish officials. As usual, Åkerblad's language skills brought him to the point of fluency almost immediately. Local language teachers were used at the mission, but Åkerblad questioned their usefulness. In 1792 he advised a visiting Swedish nobleman to eschew such help:

When I after some time requested Åkerblad to find me a good language teacher for the common Turkish and New Greek I might need, he answered that no language master was necessary. I only needed a good memory and to follow his instructions, after that he taught me to conjugate and decline, I should learn at least 10 words every day, and when I had mastered the most indispensable [words] I should immediately start talking as well as I could.¹⁴

According to his own judgement the pupil was successful and after just six weeks was able to communicate on his own with local Turks and Greeks. This method was probably similar to Åkerblad's own approach; he usually became fluent in a new language within a couple of months. Except for the dragomans he was one of the few non-resident Europeans that spoke and understood the local languages to a degree of perfection, something that nuanced his view of his surroundings. The consequences of not speaking the local languages were well-expressed by Åkerblad's colleague Erik Bergstedt:

¹⁴ Carl Axel Löwenhielm (1772–1861), *Min lefvernes beskrifning* (Stockholm: Lars Hökerbergs Bokförlag, 1923), 75.

if [the traveller] is, moreover, not capable in the country's language... he will soon become aware how slender the knowledge he manages to collect is, even if it is done with the greatest of care. Thus it often happens that one finds travellers scantily informed about the countries they have seen, and that one usually encounters much vacuity in travelogues.¹⁵

Erik Bergstedt (1760–1836) is a figure who in many ways serves as a mirror to Åkerblad. Their careers would cross several times, both in the diplomatic service and as scholars. They knew each other and corresponded. Bergstedt was the son of a vicar. After studying history in Uppsala—like Åkerblad—he joined the foreign service as a clerk in 1779, the same position in which Åkerblad would start his career four years later. Bergstedt obtained his first foreign posting in 1784 and left for Copenhagen in May, half a year after Åkerblad had departed for Constantinople. Bergstedt's next posting was to St. Petersburg in 1786, and to Berlin the following year, and finally, in 1790 to Paris. In 1793 he left the diplomatic service. He travelled through the Iberian peninsula and Italy, stayed for more than a year in Constantinople, visited Egypt and returned to Sweden only in 1797.

Like Bergstedt, many observers recognized the importance of knowing languages when trying to understand and describe foreign cultures. In comparison to most of his Swedish and foreign colleagues Åkerblad had considerably greater access to oral and written testimonies than the majority of travellers and western inhabitants in the Ottoman Empire. He was better able than most other Europeans to quickly inform himself on Ottoman affairs. At the request of the pastor of the German church in Stockholm Åkerblad investigated printing facilities and other cultural matters in Constantinople. Christoph Wilhelm Lüdeke was in the process of amending and finishing the third volume of his work on the Ottoman Empire.¹⁶

The main sources for Åkerblad's first stay in Constantinople and early travels in the Eastern Mediterranean are his letters to Gjörwell and entries in his two surviving notebooks. Some of the information in the letters was published in Gjörwell's *Upfostrings-Sällskapets Tidningar* [*The Educational Society's Magazine*] and *Almänna Tidningar* [*The Public Magazine*].

¹⁵ J.-B. Lechevalier, *Resa till Propontiden och Svarta Hafvet, öfversatt med Anmärknin-gar och Tilläggningar af E. Bergstedt*, trans. and ed. by Erik Bergstedt, 3 vols. (Stockholm, 1802–5), 1: introduction. The three-volume work is to a large extent made up of Bergstedt's personal comments and additions to Lechevalier and other travellers' texts.

¹⁶ Christoph Wilhelm Lüdeke, *Beschreibung des türkischen Reiches nach seiner Religions-und Staatsverfassung in der letzten Hälfte des 18:ten Jahrhundert*, 3 vols. (Leipzig, 1771–89). Åkerblad and other informants are mentioned, 3:42.

Early on, Gjörrwell asked Åkerblad to furnish him with information that he could publish but Åkerblad remained restive:

The Assessor's offer that I should send letters with observations to the magazines of The Educational Society is all the more flattering as it convinces me of the Assessor's well disposed opinion of me; if I return to the fatherland I might have something worthy of this learned magazine but during my travels my time is too circumscribed to let me write anything.¹⁷

Notwithstanding Åkerblad's discouraging answer to his request, Gjörrwell continued to give accounts of both Åkerblad's life in Constantinople and his travels. Åkerblad's career was followed, postings and nominations were communicated, and edited extracts from Åkerblad's letters were published.¹⁸ Åkerblad's often outspoken judgments on other scholars were tempered and statements that could be interpreted as political were removed.

Åkerblad was well-read in travel literature. However, the extent to which he could model his impressions and experiences on previous Swedish accounts of travels in Ottoman territories is open to discussion. The travelogue and letters of Björnsthål was one of the few Swedish publications on the Ottoman Empire available to Åkerblad. Åkerblad had read this but it is hard to find similarities between the two. Neither of them were overtly positive towards daily life in Constantinople, but in comparison to Björnsthål's letters Åkerblad's writings contain few sweeping characterizations of the Turks, or any other peoples for that matter. Indeed, Åkerblad rather defended the inhabitants' rights to decide for themselves on issues that concerned his own interests, for instance languages. He later mocked presumptuous European professors who wanted to teach the Ottoman Greeks how to pronounce their own language. He pointed out that no erudite person had tried to teach the inhabitants of Mesopotamia the correct pronunciation of ancient Aramaic, nor tried to teach the Arabs in Aleppo to recite the Koran.¹⁹ Åkerblad never adhered to the travelogue genre where generalisations about local populations were rather the rule than the exception, and where disparaging descriptions of 'local customs' are common. Åkerblad's attitude to this genre, as to many

¹⁷ JDÅ to Gjörrwell, 26 January 1785, Constantinople, no. 13, Ep G 7:12, KB.

¹⁸ Åkerblad is quoted/mentioned: 31 Mar 1785, 25 Aug 1785, 2 Feb 1786, 20 Nov 1786, 26 Oct 1787, 20 Feb 1788, 21 May 1788, 8 Apr 1789, 25 May 1789, 9 Sep 1789 and 17 Feb 1790. See list of Åkerblad's publications for complete references.

¹⁹ Åkerblad, *Iscrizione greca sopra una lamina di piombo trovata in un sepolcro nelle vicinanze di Atene* (Rome, 1813), 35.

other types of both literary and scholarly genres, seems to be informed by his usual disdain for expressing what was already known. In 1787 he explained to Gjörwell:

I believe that I have already in a letter mentioned the reason which has prevented me from complying with Sir's order to send something more comprehensive about my travels. I have been so disgusted by reading, even in Swedish, letters full of platitudes, that I have promised not to bore anyone with my observations until I am convinced of their value. I am certain that Sir thinks as I do.²⁰

The link between personal experiences and writing continued to be a theme in Åkerblad's correspondence and publications. His reluctance to write also governed his scholarly publications.

Books were often difficult to procure and Åkerblad wrote to Gjörwell: "Sir cannot imagine how difficult it is to get books from Christendom here; those that are ordered from Vienna do not even arrive in half a year. This inconvenience is all the greater while few people own considerable collections of books here, thus one is often in embarrassment when wanting to cite."²¹ That the books were needed for 'citation' could make one suspect that he was writing with the intention of publishing. If this was the case there is no evidence from this period. He did not publish his first treatise until 1800.

Writing the City

Many of Åkerblad's acquaintances in Constantinople were in the process of writing up or had already published on their sojourn in the city. The risk of producing trite travel writing was real and many of the writers felt it acutely. The reaction of a European audience to the letters from Constantinople by Åkerblad's friend Villoison (introduced below) is a good example. Whilst Villoison's letters might not have been destined for publication, they were certainly meant to be circulated among the receivers. They were mildly mocked by the writer Christoph Martin Wieland who echoed Åkerblad's comments on "Swedish letters full of platitudes": "The peculiar man has seen and noticed everything that everyone has seen before him, and what we have read in every travelogue."²²

²⁰ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

²¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 January 1785, Constantinople, no. 13, Ep G 7:12, KB.

²² Wieland to Sophie von La Roche, 15 December 1784, Weimar, in *Wielands Briefwechsel. Bd 8 (Juli 1782–Juni 1785)*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Akademie Verl., 1992), 1:351.

Two multi-volume works that Åkerblad knew, and whose authors he was acquainted with, offer an interesting comparison between different genres and outlooks. The books were clearly intended for quite different audiences. The first author's books, Toderini's, catered to the learned circles while Sestini's books aimed at a broader audience. Sestini's book is a travelogue of sorts while Toderini's is a description of local science and culture. What they do have in common is that they both describe the city of Constantinople. Whilst the different motivations of their authors might suggest that the comparison of these two books is perhaps unfair, they do shed light on both Åkerblad's orientation in Ottoman culture and the different worldviews of the authors. Both writers were Italian, had a background of religious education and had spent ample time in Constantinople.

Åkerblad's disdain for a certain type of travel writing is obvious from his comments after meeting the Italian traveller Domenico Sestini (1750–1832).²³ Åkerblad criticized Sestini's book with fervour:

We are quite good friends but I have difficulties in understanding where-upon the credit he enjoys in the literary world is founded. Has Sir seen *Lettere dalla Sicilia e dalla Turchia*? ... The last 2 tomes about Turkey are recently added. I have barely ever read such wretchedness. I do not know what the Italians may think, but for someone who reads German, French and above all English travelogues it is appalling.²⁴

While Sestini sometimes gave interesting descriptions of local customs, trade etc., he also indulged in generalizations. During a walk in Constantinople he ended up in front of Sultan Ahmet's mosque, now often called the Blue Mosque:

it has six *Minaré* with three galleries each, and the Mosque is nothing but a copy of that of Santa Sofia like all the other mosques of various Sultans, these peoples being devoid of the capacity of invention, you can find it vaporized inside the *Cauk* that they wear on their heads, that once they take them off their heads remain like [empty] pumpkins.²⁵

Sestini first travelled in the East in 1777 and ended his long career as professor at the University of Pisa. Sestini had come to know Björnsthål well

²³ Luigi Tondo, *Domenico Sestini e il medagliere Mediceo* (Florence: Olschki, 1990). Åkerblad and Sestini remained in contact into the 1810s. JDÅ to Ciampi, 11 October 1813, KVHAA.

²⁴ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 January 1785, no. 13, Ep G 7:12, KB

²⁵ Domenico Sestini, *Lettere del Signor abate Domenico Sestini scritte dalla Sicilia e dalla Turchia a diversi suoi amici in Toscana*, 7 vols. (Livorno, 1784), 6:95.

during his earlier visit to Constantinople and held him in great esteem. Sestini was generally positive towards the Swedes, whom he praised: “those that have been most benevolent to me, are the Northern nations . . . Sweden, rich of rare talents.”²⁶

In the same context as his critique against Sestini Åkerblad praised the volumes on Turkish learning and culture by the ex-Jesuit Gian-Battista Toderini (1728–1799):

Another man of learning is also here, my particular friend that more [than Sestini] deserves Sir’s attention, it is the ex-Jesuit G. Bat. Toderini, known for several works in Italian on Physics and Philosophy, is now preparing a treaty on the Turkish Literature. The title is *Letteratura Turchesca* . . . It is now 3 years since he begun this difficult task, a subject matter until now quite unexplored. It is now mostly finished. Mr Toderini has had the goodness to read me many parts of it and I admit that it is quite an achievement.²⁷

Toderini had lost his position when the Society of Jesus was suppressed. He was in Constantinople as the private tutor to the son of the *bailo* Garzoni, the Venetian representative at the Ottoman court. Toderini lived in the city from 1781–86 and was in the process of finishing his three-volume work *Letteratura Turchesca* when Åkerblad arrived.²⁸

Toderini’s survey of Turkish literature and learning gives a broad view of literary history, the study of sciences, libraries, printing and educational institutions. It was immediately translated into French and German. Gjörwell added his own appreciative comment when he related Åkerblad’s letter in his journal: “When you know to what Order he [Toderini] belonged, you may rest assured that he possesses exhaustive knowledge.”²⁹ Though the Jesuits never could work in protestant Sweden—all religious orders were expelled during the Reformation and banned thereafter—their reputation for scholarship was well-established. Toderini’s interests were encyclopaedic. In addition to religious tracts he had earlier published a dissertation on marine lightning conductors as well as other treatises addressed to the improvement of manufacture and commerce. There was a break in Toderini’s production after the suppression of the Jesuit order and his next major work was published anonymously in 1780. It was a

²⁶ Ibid., 7:33.

²⁷ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 January 1785, Constantinople, no. 13, Ep G 7:12, KB.

²⁸ Giambattista Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca*, 3 vols. (Venice, 1787). In French Paris, 1789, and German Königsberg, 1790. Paolo Preto, *Venezia e i turchi* (Florence: Sansoni, 1975), 525ff.

²⁹ Gjörwell, *Upfostrings-Sällskapets Tidningar*, 31 March 1785, 191.

philosophical treatise and in an enlarged 1785 edition Toderini incorporated readings and experiences from his years in Constantinople. In addition to taking oriental learning seriously Toderini showed his disdain for the slave trade and colonialism: "You should ask the Negroes, bought like pitiful cattle to the dishonour of humanity, labouring at the caves of the [silver mines of] Potosi, and in Peru, losing their strength and life, what advantage they draw from the luxuries of Europe."³⁰

Toderini's broad interests and scientific curiosity are mirrored in the depth of enquiry and organisation of the material in *Letteratura Turchesca*. It starts with a passionate defence of Ottoman and Muslim attitudes to learning and science:

Before commencing the study of Turkish Literature, I must correct a great popular error, still rooted in the soul of many learned Europeans, who are firm in the belief, writing on Muhammad, that while the sciences were cultivated before, he felt that the threat against his doctrine was such that he with severe rules closed any admittance to the study, making ignorance the base upon which the bizarre Moslem religion was founded.³¹

The purpose of the entire work was to relegate this error to history. Toderini's respect for the local literature and culture is obvious. In another context he remarked how a catalogue of the rich manuscript libraries in Constantinople would be a way of enriching European culture:

I hope that the attempt, made with incredible effort and no little cost, which I present to the Republic of Letters, will stimulate skilful persons in oriental languages, with the help of generous and powerful Patrons, to compile an annotated catalogue of all manuscripts in the Turkish libraries, thus enriching with new treasures and knowledge European literature and sciences.³²

Toderini's book was an invitation to further Turkish studies and his view of science, literature and learning was inclusive. In the first volume there is a chapter on music and a plate explaining Turkish musical notation and another plate with sheet music. Contemporaries noticed this musical interest and Toderini's work was cited in musical dictionaries and often mentioned in the many reviews of the *Letteratura Turchesca*.³³ It is easy

³⁰ [Giambattista Toderini], *L'ONESTO UOMO ovvero saggi di morale filosofia dai soli principii della ragione*, 2nd rev. ed. (Venice, 1785), 150. On 'Turkish' religious and moral matters e.g.: 67, 77, 162.

³¹ Toderini, *Letteratura Turchesca*, 111.

³² *Ibid.*, 2:30.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1:222–52; Ernst L. Gerber, *Historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1792), 2:134; *The Monthly Review*, 1789, t. 1, enthusiastic review of the

to exaggerate the merits of Toderini's book, but as Åkerblad and other commentators admit even when criticizing it or pointing out weaknesses, very little of its kind had ever been published before.

Toderini showed what a single person could achieve in a few years in Constantinople, even without profound linguistic knowledge. Toderini made a systematic and thorough overview of available sources of learning in Constantinople and fought for recognition of Ottoman scholarship and a balanced judgment on religious Muslim learning, while Sestini made anecdotal, disparaging and often self-righteous judgements.

The geographical backgrounds of Sestini and Toderini are important. They were both Italians but from distinctly different peninsular states. Toderini came from Veneto, an area with deep and sustained contacts with the Ottoman Empire, often of a conflictual kind but still continuous, while Sestini's Tuscany was contained in a wholly different regional context without such strong ties to the East. This partly explains Toderini's propensity to treat the local populations and their culture respectfully.

However, Toderini did not avoid expressing the difficulties in accessing local knowledge, and language was only one of these difficulties. Åkerblad often recognized the importance of languages for the acquisition of knowledge and ended his detailed description of *Letteratura Turchesca* with a remark on Toderini's lack of languages: "It is a pity that the Author does not know Oriental languages, his work would with such knowledge become even more complete, but his carefulness and the way he gathers his information rectifies in great measure this deficiency."³⁴

As more and more information was available it became increasingly difficult to produce well-received accounts from the East without a basic level of correctness and truthfulness. The writers themselves expressed in various ways, and with different ambitions, a quest for such 'factualness.' One writer that Åkerblad read was Alexander Drummond.³⁵ He travelled extensively in the Near East and was British consul in Aleppo from 1754–56. Drummond was well aware of the pitfalls of the genre and excused his 'dryness':

Perhaps I might have succeeded better, had I indulged a fancy, which is not altogether barren, and taken the liberty, used by some travellers, of

French ed., 665–77; *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 1791, t. 1, 274–76; *Der Neue Teutsche Merkur*, 1790, t. 1, 61–79, 190–199, 289–296. The concert is recorded. Hungaroton HCD12560; Deutsche Grammophon Archiv Produktion CD474193.

³⁴ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 January 1785, KB, Ep G 7:12, no. 13.

³⁵ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

advancing hyperboles which would be believed by some, and could not be disproved by others. I am afraid I have rather run into the other extreme, in adhering to a simple recital of dry truths, and a bare description of those objects which have fallen under my observation.³⁶

He and many writers, both before and after, have speculated that their success would have been greater had they catered more to the public's taste for sensational pieces of information, without considering the truthfulness of such titbits.

Travel books had a growing audience even though they ceased presenting what Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf Volney called *tableau d'imagination*. He had firm convictions as to where the genre was heading. Writing partly about the same geographical area as Drummond, Volney put forward the argument in the introduction to his influential travelogue *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*:

In my relation, I have endeavoured to maintain the spirit with which I conducted my researches into facts; that is, an impartial love of truth. I have restrained myself from indulging any sallies of the imagination, [*tableau d'imagination*] though I am no stranger to the power of such illusions over the generality of readers; but I am of opinion that travels belong to the department of history, and not that of romance.³⁷

The last phrase was significantly printed on the frontispiece of the first edition in 1787, in lieu of a motto: "J'ai pensé que le genre des voyages appartenait à l'Histoire, & non aux Romains." Volney had read, and was influenced by, Michaelis' questionnaire before venturing on his trip and realized the importance of corroborating old and searching for new information at the source.³⁸ Volney not only denounced travel writing as 'romance' but also suggested that it should be considered as history instead. These were signs of the beginnings of Volney's philosophy of history that he developed in his later works.

Åkerblad was familiar with the current travel literature and had formed the opinion that "above all English travelogues" were the most readable.

³⁶ Alexander Drummond, *Travels Through Different Cities of Germany, Italy, Greece, and Several Parts of Asia, as Far as the Banks of the Euphrates* (London, 1754), 214. Drummond, like many other travel writers, was accused of plagiarism and the authorship of his book has been questioned.

³⁷ Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf Volney, *Voyage en Syrie et en Égypte, pendant les années 1783, 1784 et 1785*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1787), 1: vii, quoted from the English translation (New York, 1798), lvi.

³⁸ Jean Gaulmier, *L'idéologie Volney, 1757–1820 : Contribution à l'histoire de l'orientalisme en France* (Beirut, 1951), 33f.

The quickly growing number of titles describing travels in the Near East made it more risky to fabricate facts that were easily contradicted. The era of fanciful tales from the East was coming to an end—this certainly meant that the physical and geographical conditions of the countries were better described. However, it did not automatically mean that the peoples that inhabited these territories were treated in a sympathetic manner. The quest for knowledge had no automatic consequences in terms of respect for or appreciation of local culture and learning. To disprove monsters is one thing—to prove that Turks and Muslims are neither stupid, nor driven by religious superstition, nor devoid of ‘invention’ was a different matter.

Åkerblad had clear ideas on the virtues of travel literature from different European countries, and his comments on Toderini and Sestini are interesting considering the relative scarcity of Italian travelogues. Italy as a whole, from an international perspective, was of little importance in terms of eighteenth-century travel literature.³⁹

Should Toderini’s worldview be explained by his education in the Jesuit order within the context of Northern Italian enlightenment circles? And is this together with an element of chance—that is his demotion to tutor and permanence in Constantinople—enough to explain his *Letteratura Turchesca*? Toderini’s scientific interests and wide cultural background extended his curiosity beyond the limits of his own territories. That his knowledge and the way he communicated it is exceptional was clear to most observers, including Åkerblad, whose taste in travel writing was firmly on the side of the ‘dry fact seekers’ and aligned with a trend that showed respect for Ottoman science and learning.

Åkerblad was thus informed early on by the most recent and updated scholarship on Ottoman cultural matters. He had an interest in cultural matters other than languages and antiquities. An example of this is a memorandum where Åkerblad informed someone in government on Ottoman customs concerning the swearing of oaths in various circumstances. Åkerblad referred amongst other sources to various suras of the ‘Alcoran’ and exemplified from military life, law courts etc. His notebooks also con-

³⁹ Daniel Roche’s investigation of the *Bibliothèque universelle des voyages* is enlightening, in the eighteenth century 187 travelogues were published in Italian and Spanish; 891 in English; 1080 in French; 1330 in German, Dutch, Danish etc. *Humeurs vagabondes : de la circulation des hommes et de l’utilité des voyages* (Paris: Fayard, 2003), 25.

tain ample historical material.⁴⁰ Whether and to what extent Åkerblad's disdain for Sestini's books was based on their lack of learning, or driven by distaste for the gossip and worldly nature of his letters is hard to say. His admiration for Toderini is easier to understand.

At the age of twenty-two Åkerblad's literary taste was established and his interest in Turkish and Muslim history and culture firmly rooted.

⁴⁰ Fol. 380, vol. 7, T-Ö, F 818 g, UUL; Vat. lat.: lists of Indian emperors fols. 4v, 6v, Ottoman Sultans fol. 71v, Arab astronomers fol. 21r.

CHAPTER THREE

DIPLOMACY AND INTRIGUE

The arrival of a new French ambassador and his party of accompanying artists and scientists provided an injection of novelty into the cultural life of the foreign community in the Ottoman capital. Count Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste Choiseul-Gouffier (1752–1817) was appointed French ambassador to the Porte and arrived in Constantinople in September 1784. He had already travelled extensively in the Ottoman Empire and published the first volume of his work, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* in 1782.¹ The large folio volume is beautifully illustrated (Figure 6).

The *Voyage pittoresque*... and Choiseul-Gouffier's knowledge of Greek and Turkish matters played a role in his being chosen as ambassador. The introduction is sixteen pages long in the original version and effusive in its support of Greek liberation from the Ottoman yoke. There are several disparaging comments on Islam and the Ottoman state as well as explicit support for the Greek quest for independence: "how to observe without indignation the stupid Musulmans, leaning on the ruins of Sparta or Athens, tranquilly imposing the tributes of servitude, in places where the daggers so many times have been sharpened against tyranny?"²

This was not the right kind of book to have as an introduction when arriving in Constantinople as ambassador. When Choiseul-Gouffier realized that he was a candidate for the advantageous post in Constantinople—in addition to the prestige there were great earnings to be made from trade concessions—he sent out agents to retrieve the copies in circulation, as far as to Britain and Germany.³ His agents were, however, not completely successful since many copies of the first edition still remained in the possession of the purchasers. Soon a new introduction had been

¹ Marie-Gabriel-Florent-Auguste Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*..., 2 vols. in several tomes (Paris 1782–1822). For its background and production see: Frédéric Barbier, "Le Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce par le comte de Choiseul-Gouffier," in *Hellénisme et hippocratismes dans l'Europe méditerranéenne: autour de D. Coray*, ed. Roland Andréani, Henri Michel, and Elie Pélaquier (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 2000), 223–64.

² Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1:v.

³ Léonce Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier: La France en Orient sous Louis XVI* (Paris 1887), 66f; Barbier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 258.



Figure 6. Conversations in the garden of the Palais de France. Except for the cityscape outside the walls, the figures in this picture could well imagine themselves in a garden in France. In the background are Hagia Sophia and Sultan Ahmet's mosque. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1: pl. 76 bis. UUL.

drafted, and the rants against Turkish oppression were much toned down. The quotation above was rewritten. The revised preface is shorter by several pages, 12 instead of 16. The programme Choiseul-Gouffier proposed for French trade in the Mediterranean on the basis of the "existence of this weakened Empire" was much less aggressive in the second version.⁴ The concrete call for Greek independence from the Ottomans was erased. Many of the ideas propagated in the original preface were central to the debate on relations with the Ottoman Empire.

Someone in the diplomatic community in Constantinople also owned a copy of the original version of the preface. The situation was delicate and Choiseul-Gouffier's enemies, not wanting him to get off too lightly, thought it worthwhile to make him pay for his aggressive critique of the Ottoman government. It was probably British diplomats that had the original preface translated into Turkish and presented it to the sultan.⁵

⁴ 'Original' version, 1:xiii. Expression not present in the 'censored' version.

⁵ Antoine Baudouin Gisbert de Dedem, *Un général hollandais sous le premier empire : Mémoires du général B: on de Dedem de Gelder 1774–1825* (Paris: Plon, 1900), 21.



Figure 7. Detail from figure 6. A trio of men in discussion and a draughtsman taking in the view, possible an illustration of the work undertaken by Choiseul-Gouffier's company of artists and scholars.

Choiseul-Gouffier was summoned to the Porte and reputedly answered that the text in the Porte's possession was a counterfeit copy of the book. He returned to the Palais de France to have the pages in question reprinted at the printing shop of the embassy. A copy with the reprinted pages was prepared and subsequently presented to the Porte as the legitimate work.⁶ The anecdote gives a convincing image of the atmosphere in the city (Figure 7).

The key to understanding the relationship between Sweden and the Ottoman Empire during this period is to be found in the relations with Russia and the perennially bad finances of the Swedish state. If summarized, Swedish aims were limited to three principal goals: the use of Turkey in the relations with Russia, the earning of subsidies while supporting Turkey's intentions in its Russian politics and the protection of Swedish trade in the Mediterranean.

That Sweden still had a certain weight in the relations between the major Mediterranean powers, including Russia, is clear in the instructions given to Choiseul-Gouffier before his departure for Constantinople.⁷

⁶ Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, 78.

⁷ "Mémoire pour servir d'instruction au Sieur Comte de Choiseul Gouffier. . .," in *Recueil des instructions données aux ambassadeurs et ministres de France. Vol. XXIX, Turquie*, ed. Pierre Duparc (Paris: Éd. du CNRS, 1969), 482.

Choiseul-Gouffier was instructed to investigate the true nature of Swedish intentions in relation to Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Both foreign diplomats and Ottoman officials tried to understand their counterparts' plans. However, the frequent change of allegiances undermined the entire idea of 'true intentions.'

Swedish diplomatic representation abroad was not extensive; during this period there were only missions in Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Berlin, Dresden, Hamburg, Regensburg, Vienna, Paris, The Hague, London, Madrid and Constantinople.⁸ Only St. Petersburg had an envoy continuously present and many missions were often without a minister. Saving money was an often-cited reason for the reluctance to appoint new personnel. In addition to the governmental system there were a large number of consuls and agents, most often not of Swedish origin, who tended to perform the role of commercial agents. The roles and actions of consuls were often important for Swedish subjects abroad even though they had little influence on affairs back in Stockholm.⁹

Payment, living costs and funds for travelling were ever-recurring issues in both the correspondence of Åkerblad and his superiors. In the beginning Åkerblad was remunerated by tapping the mission's account for 'extraordinary expenses' and Heidenstam paid his living costs.¹⁰ The mission was plagued by continual economic problems and payments from Stockholm were often late and insufficient. To what extent the petitions of both Åkerblad and his superiors are to be taken at face value is hard to determine. That the economic circumstances were difficult is indubitable—but considering the lateness and the parsimony in Stockholm their strategy might have been to step up demands to stress the situation. The heads of the legation often had to advance means from their own pockets to keep the mission running.

Reading Åkerblad's correspondence from Constantinople one can conclude that his main occupation was to extend his knowledge. We seldom hear about the actual work carried out at the mission. When he mentions

⁸ Sten Carlsson, *Den svenska utrikespolitikens historia. III:1, 1792–1810* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1954).

⁹ Leos Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce: The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping, 1720–1815* (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2004); Müller, "The Swedish Consular Service in Southern Europe, 1720–1815," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31, no. 2 (2006): 186–95.

¹⁰ Heidenstam to Chancery Board, 10 May 1786, Turcica 62, SNA; Arne Forsell, "Utrikesförvaltningens historia 1721–1809," in *Den svenska utrikesförvaltningens historia*, ed. Sven Tunberg (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1935), 314ff.

his duties he is not happy with the routine work which mainly consisted of drafting, ciphering and deciphering correspondence, etc. He would keep on complaining throughout all his diplomatic postings. The workload changed rapidly depending on political developments and the initiative of the head of mission. It is also obvious that the roles were not yet fully professionalized. Åkerblad alternated between identifying himself as a fully employed state servant and a free scholar.

The tension between Åkerblad's work in the diplomatic service and his career as an international scholar is a theme we will follow until he disobeys the king's order to return to Sweden in 1804. This tension was already obvious during his first postings to Constantinople. His interests were not yet as clearly outlined as later, neither was his network as large. Nevertheless, scholarly activities and his meetings with other savants were the main subjects in his letters to Stockholm.

Life in Constantinople gradually improved when Åkerblad met more people in the diplomatic and international community (Figure 8). He informed Gjörwell of his new acquaintances:

Mr Abbé de Lile is no less famous in the literary world for his beautiful *Poème les Jardins*, an excellent imitation of Virgilii *Georgica*. He is a small and lean man but full of genius and quite agreeable... The Librarian Mr d'Hauterive has already left with Prince Maurocordato to Wallachia as his Secretary. I forgot to ask him if he has published anything.¹¹

Both Delille and d'Hauterive were part of Choiseul-Gouffier's entourage. Åkerblad's abundant references to scholars and artists in his letters to Gjörwell are often accompanied by a list of their publications. Jean-Baptiste-Gaspard D'Ansse de Villoison (1750/53–1805) was another new friend with whom Åkerblad met almost daily. Villoison had studied oriental languages, particularly Hebrew, with Björnståhl in Paris in the late 1760s. He corresponded with Gjörwell as well as with other Swedish scholars. Villoison supported Åkerblad and wrote with admiration to Gjörwell after meeting him:

Mr Akerblad... strides in the footsteps of Mr Björnståhl, he has an incredible talent and an inexpressible ardor for oriental languages, which he already possesses to a superior degree. I have witnessed his amazing success in Constantinople and I loved as much the qualities of his heart, his goodness, his

¹¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 March 1785, no. 33, Ep G 7:13, KB. Jacques Delille 1738–1813. Alexandre d'Hauterive 1754–1830.

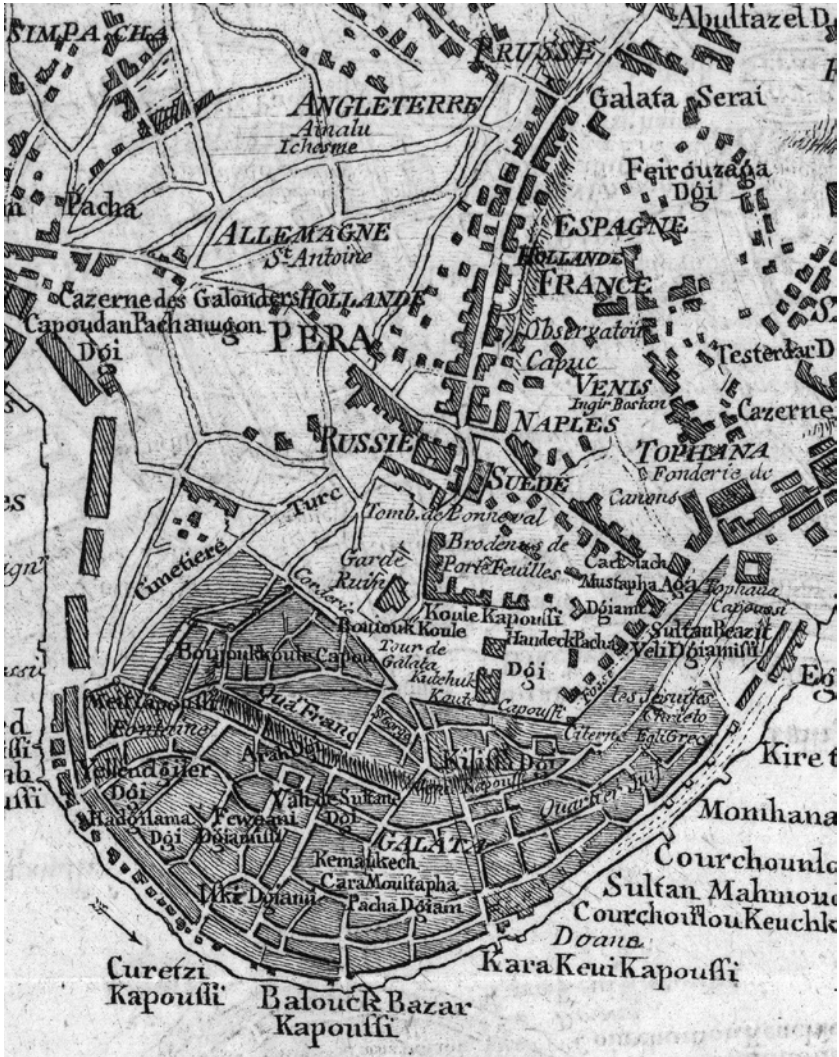


Figure 8. The western missions were located in the suburb of Pera on the other side of the Golden Horn. The names of many missions can be seen along the 'Grand rue de Pera,' today's İstiklal Caddesi. The consulates of e.g. Sweden and the Netherlands occupy the same plots today. Bergstedt, *Resa till Propontiden*. UUL.

gentleness and his modesty as I admired his spirit and his distinguished talents. He is really worthy of being Swedish.¹²

Villoison seldom shrank from extreme flattery of both protectors and friends. Even his mostly obsequious biographer admits to certain excesses.¹³ Nevertheless, it seems that Villoison felt a strong connection with Sweden; in particular, he referred on many occasions to Björnsthåhl and lamented his early death.

In 1781 Villoison rediscovered, and in 1788 published, the now so-called A and B scholia to the Iliad contained in two manuscripts in the Marciana Library in Venice.¹⁴ Renaissance scholars had referred to the manuscripts but they had subsequently fallen into oblivion. The scholia Villoison published fuelled the debate about whether Homer was an actual historical person and if a single author had written the epics, or if they were composed over a longer period. His edition of the Iliad manuscripts and commentaries gave Homeric scholarship a new turn. The 'Homeric question' that arose in the wake of the commentaries published in 1788 would continue to occupy scholars well beyond his and Åkerblad's lifetimes. An anecdote holds that Villoison was alarmed by the use of the scholia in the new theories on the Homeric authorship proposed by F. A. Wolf in his ground-breaking *Prolegomena to Homer* from 1795. The historian of classical scholarship John Edwin Sandys observed that: "The last scholar of the old school [Villoison] had unconsciously forged the weapons for the first scholar of the new [Wolf]."¹⁵

One of Åkerblad's main activities during the postings to Constantinople was collecting new textual material. By texts, any kind of writing is intended: inscriptions, manuscripts or even printed books. Finding new manuscripts and other samples of writing was one of the main concerns of both scholars and travellers in the Eastern Mediterranean. Even travellers who did not know ancient languages or foreign alphabets searched for and copied inscriptions in order to send them to learned societies or to give them away as presents. The quest for manuscripts was often cited as one of the reasons why their respective governments supported their

¹² Villoison to Gjörwell, 2 April 1785, no. 186, Ep. G 11, KB.

¹³ Charles Joret, *D'Anse de Villoison et l'hellénisme en France pendant le dernier tiers du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1910).

¹⁴ Homer, *Omerou Ilias syn tois scholiis*. ..., ed. D'Anse de Villoison (Venice, 1788).

¹⁵ F. A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer* (1795), trans. with introduction and notes by Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most, and James E. G. Zetzel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1985); John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, 3 vols., 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1921), 2:398.

trips. Both Åkerblad and Villoison dreamed of discovering an unknown ancient text. Indeed, this is what Villoison did when he rediscovered the two codices of the *Iliad*. Significantly, they were discovered in a well-known library in Europe and not in the East.

However, the quest for texts in the Orient did present certain particularities. The history of Ottoman printing was not fully known and books printed by the Christian orders in the East or even books in Modern Greek were often little known in Western Europe.¹⁶ The relatively late arrival of printing in the Ottoman Empire—with a few exceptions—meant that most texts were in manuscript form.

Villoison and Åkerblad's preferences were clearly geared towards literature and texts with historical contents. The abundance of religious texts often tired Åkerblad and he had no qualms when commenting on how boring he found them: "this literature offers few attractions, and such studies require a lot of courage."¹⁷

Villoison did manage to find one interesting new text during his years in Greece. This manuscript was quite difficult to acquire. He had to ask for the assistance of Choiseul-Gouffier and "it required a great deal of labour and sweat to get the manuscript from Father Sloutziari."¹⁸ Åkerblad was as usual realistic, but even he seemed afflicted by the dream of many contemporary scholars: to discover a manuscript that would make their fame in the learned community.

Åkerblad's perennial economic problems made it impossible for him to acquire any 'real' treasures. Villoison had the support of important patrons—that of Choiseul-Gouffier in particular. Åkerblad did buy manuscripts but expressed doubts about collecting as he wrote to his friend Olof Swartz, professor in botany in Stockholm, from Constantinople in December 1792:

I have wasted more money than I should on manuscripts of all kinds, and the worst of it all is that I sense the complete futility of it. A flash of lightning

¹⁶ Villoison reports for instance with satisfaction how: "I bought on the island of Amor-gos a very rare and very little known book in common Greek," fol. 121v, Add MS 23,890, British Library, London (hereafter BL).

¹⁷ Åkerblad, "Mémoire. Sur les noms coptes de quelques villes et villages d'Égypte par M. Åkerblad," *Journal Asiatique*, 2 ser., t. 13, 1834, first part (Avril) 337–377, second part (Mai) 385–435, dated in text December 1810, 340.

¹⁸ Homer, *Ilias syn tois scholiois*, xlv. The manuscript (now in Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, hereafter BNF) is the only surviving source of a tract by Ioannes Lydus, *On Powers or The Magistracies of the Roman State*, dated to ca. 550 CE.

strikes from France that makes a connoisseur of herbs look up from his magnifying glass and his cap, and the orientalist from his manuscript. . . .¹⁹

The collection of manuscripts and the study of botany seemed futile in revolutionary times. But Åkerblad would continue to collect both manuscripts and artefacts as far as he could afford to. The miniature below is from a copy of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* that Åkerblad bought in 1792, the same year that he wrote Swartz about the futility of collecting (Figure 9). It was made in Herat, or in what is today north east Iran in c. 1440–50. It contains 410 folios and 74 miniatures of high quality. Even with possibly depressed prices on the Constantinople book market it must have cost Åkerblad a substantial sum.²⁰

Theatre at Palais de Suède

The first sojourn in Constantinople laid the ground for Åkerblad's large web of acquaintances in the classical and orientalist communities. As his letters make clear, Åkerblad mostly associated with the French community. It is also evident that Åkerblad made good use of his contacts when he continued to travel. He had already at this point gained access to a large European scholarly network. His language capabilities were his most obvious source of 'merit,' if we accept that merit was necessary to enter the scholarly community. His readings and studies were progressively widening. It is true that he complained about his social life, but there is no question that life in Constantinople had given him radically different opportunities to join an international learned community in comparison to what life in Stockholm would have brought during the same years.

Åkerblad clearly made efforts to create and sustain a web of international acquaintances. He was also well attuned to the need to publish and always noted the works of the respective scholars and travellers that he met. This did not exclude the maintenance of his Swedish contacts. He often asked Gjörwell to pass on greetings etc., within the learned circles in Sweden.

The French ambassador brought a range of scholars and artists with him to Constantinople. The 74 canon warship *le Séduisant* was loaded with

¹⁹ JDÅ to Olof Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien [The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences], Stockholm (hereafter KVA).

²⁰ Yuri A. Petrosyan et al., *Pages of Perfection: Islamic Paintings and Calligraphy from the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg* (Milan: Electa, 1995), 186–91. On Åkerblad's manuscript collection p. 191f.

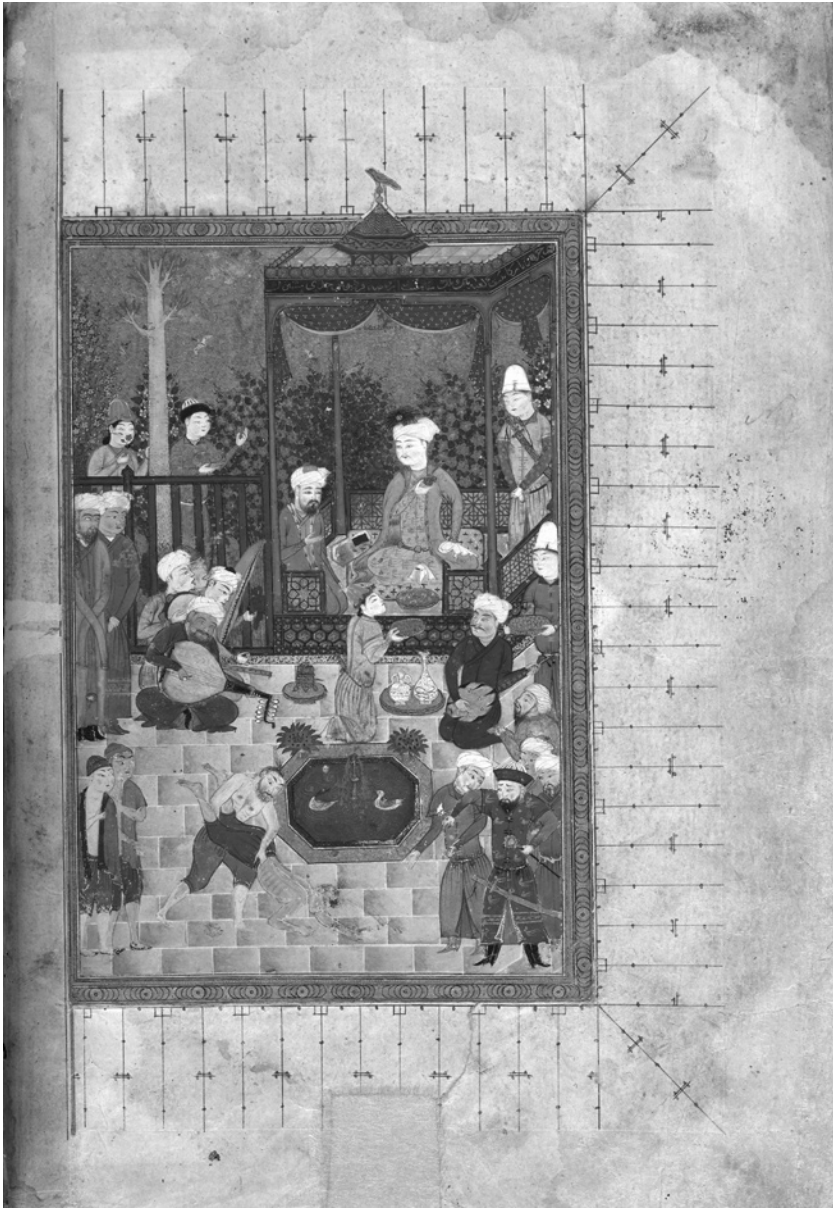


Figure 9. Illustration in a *Shahnameh* manuscript acquired by Åkerblad in Constantinople in 1792. Fol. 2r, C-822, St. Petersburg branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

learning: "several of these gentlemen are members of the French Academy, or that of Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres. Our vessel is thus in some way a little ambulating academy."²¹ Some of the artists and draughtsmen that had been part of Choiseul-Gouffier's earlier voyage and engaged in the production of the *Voyage pittoresque* came with him this second time. Åkerblad listed his new acquaintances in a letter to Gjörwell:

Of the 3 Secretaries that arrived here with Count de Choiseul I should mention Mr Kauffer, who has made a fairly accurate map of Propontis, now the Marmora Sea, including both canals. It was during his trip in 1776 that he drew it. It is dedicated to Mr Count Choiseul. Mr Kauffer was good enough to present me with it. ... Of the two painters in the suite of the Ambassador only Mr Fauvel is still here ... Mr Fauvel is celebrated here in Pera for the beautiful decorations he made in the theatre that exists in the Swedish Palace.²²

This was his first meeting with Louis-François-Sébastien Fauvel (1753–1838).²³ Fauvel would spend most of his adult life in Ottoman territories, first in Constantinople and later in Athens, where he would also act as French consul. Fauvel had already spent a couple of years travelling in Greece and the archipelago from 1780–82.

Social life in the diplomatic community was intense and the Swedish mission with Heidenstam as its active head offered entertainment:

It is also a novelty that Sir will not be displeased to know, that we have Spectacles here. Only one performance has been given considering the Lent. It was two plays: La partie de chasse d'Henri Quatre and l'Advocat Patelin. Sir should not criticize the good taste of the concerned for the sake of Patelin. One must try to entertain the public, and the public has never read, even less seen a Theatrical piece and is thus best edified by Farces. And I did notice that it was more amused by the ragged waistcoat of Patelin than by the last scenes of Henri Quatre that I find so beautiful.²⁴

²¹ Guillaume Martin, *Voyage à Constantinople: Fait à l'occasion de l'ambassade de M. le comte de Choiseul-Gouffier à la Porte ottomane* (Paris, 1821), 2–3.

²² JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 March 1785, no. 33, Ep G 7:13, KB. Frédéric Hitzel, "Un ingénieur français au service de la sublime porte: François KAUFFER (1751?–1801)," in *Science in Islamic Civilisation*, ed. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu and Feza Günergun (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2000).

²³ Alessia Zambon, *Fauvel. Aux origines de l'archéologie française en Grèce* (Paris: INHA, 2013); Zambon, "Louis-François-Sébastien Fauvel et la constitution de la collection Choiseul-Gouffier," in *Le voyage en Grèce du comte de Choiseul-Gouffier*, ed. O. Cavalier (Avignon: Fondation Calvet et Éditions A. Barthélemy, 2007); P. E. Legrand, "Biographie de Louis-François-Sébastien Fauvel. Antiquaire et Consul (1753–1838)," *Revue archéologique*, 1897, 44.

²⁴ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 March 1785, no. 33, Ep G 7:13, KB.

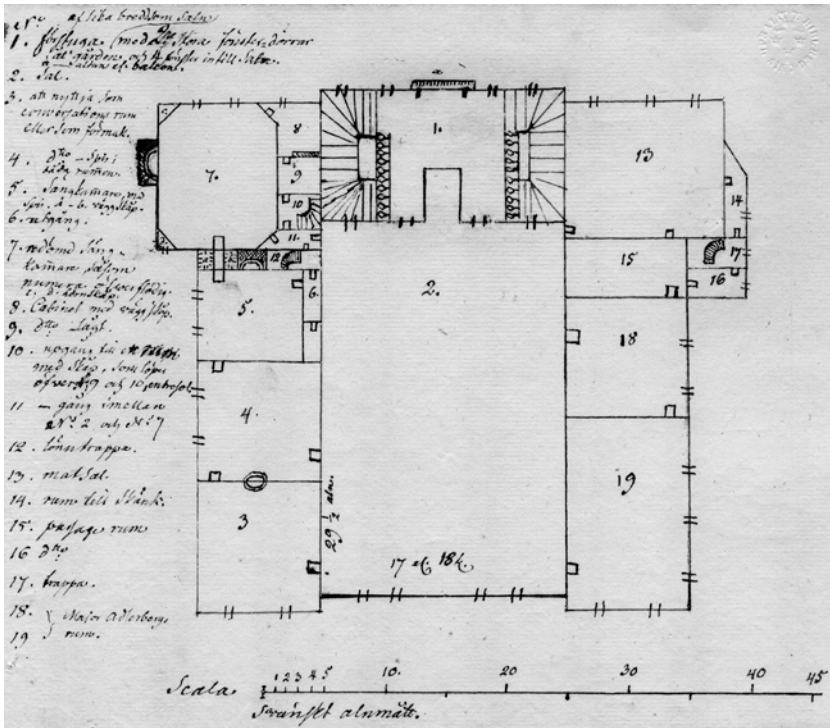


Figure 10. The second floor of the Swedish Palace at the Grand rue de Pera. The large room where the theatre was performed is marked 2. Floor plan made around 1791 by Pehr Olof von Asp, the next Swedish minister. F 646 a, UUL.

It was Anna Heidenstam (born Hochpied, a local influential merchant family of Dutch origins), together with the wife of the Austrian intersonce, who initiated the performances that started in March 1785 and continued for at least a year (Figure 10).

Women played a large role in organising and promoting social life in the foreign community. They had asked Choiseul-Gouffier for permission to borrow French officers as actors but this was not granted and a French troupe was hired instead. Choiseul-Gouffier was sceptical and proposed both discipline and political reasons for his refusal:

One has found it wise to play comedy this winter in Pera. The wife of the intersonce and that of the Swedish minister, not very amiable for that matter, neither talked nor dreamed of anything but theatre and in their dramatic fervour wanted to involve some of the French officers in their gibbering. In spite of their persecutions, and those of their husbands that they have induced to act vis-à-vis me, I did not think it wise to permit it: 1st because

the king has prohibited such divertissements for officers in service and I cannot tolerate here what is forbidden in France; 2nd because what in any other time would have been without inconveniences, could in this case have very important consequences and influence the Turks in their prejudices and in the consideration our officers have managed to gain with them.²⁵

But reasons of state could only prevent the participation of the French officers. Choiseul-Gouffier was not able to fend off social pressure and demands from the diplomatic community:

These ladies, and what is more amusing, their husbands, have accused me of pedantry, and I am forced to admit that this reproach has the merit of novelty. It has been pretended that my sufferance gives me bad temper, that I do not leave my room and that I am not interested in the pleasure of others. Finally, to compensate for my rigidity, the ladies wrote to France to get a comedy troupe here. Thus I had to change language, and I opened my purse and asked them take as much as they needed, but demanding that it was put on the playbill: Pest infected may not enter, even if they pay, the same that is said for the servants in France.

Choiseul-Gouffier's mocking condition for giving his support mirrored the treatment of servants in France. The first of the plays fitted the political climate. *Henri Quatre* by Charles Collé praises the founder of the Bourbon dynasty in France. Collé had written celebratory poems for the wedding of Choiseul-Gouffier.²⁶

The repertoire was large and geared towards comedy. One of the French officers sent to Constantinople to assist the Ottomans was often present at the performances at the Swedish palace, where many other comedies in addition to *Patelin* were performed. He noted the role lists in his diary. Among the actresses were Anna von Heidenstam and Madam Herbert as well as mademoiselles "angloise" and "greco-français." The male actors were, for instance, a French cavalry captain, the painter Fauvel and members of the diplomatic and merchant community of Pera: "The performance started at 6 o'clock and ended at 9. The three pieces were quite well performed considering that the actors are amateurs." Adding to the drama another night, there was an attempt to set fire to the building during the performance, which was according to the same officer, the work of

²⁵ Choiseul-Gouffier to Charles Gravier, comte de Vergennes (the French foreign minister), 2 June 1786, in Pingaud, *Choiseul-Gouffier*, 168.

²⁶ "Article nécrologique sur M. le Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, par M. de Feletz, inséré dans le Journal des Débats, le 2 juillet 1817," reprinted in the last instalment of *Voyage pittoresque*.

"malintentioned persons . . . who without doubt meant to steal during the disorder of a fire."²⁷ In contrast to the message of Collé's play *The Barber of Seville* was staged, as well as Salieri's opera *La Scuola de' Gelosi* on later occasions.

Notwithstanding Choiseul-Gouffier's hesitation the theatrical performances at the Swedish Palace were frequent and several French officers and diplomats acted in the plays and operas. Åkerblad wrote that some in the Constantinople audience had never seen a theatrical performance before. At this time he might have been right, but it was not unheard of for the diplomatic community to stage plays and invite the inhabitants of Pera. In 1730 a French ambassador had plays performed: "the comedians played several pieces on the lawn in front of a numerous crowd of Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews and other nations."²⁸ However, even if this generation had not seen European theatre before, they participated in the social life of the foreign diplomatic community. At the carnival masquerade at the Palais de France in 1785: "from 4 to 500 persons of all religions, Catholics, Protestants, Greek schismatics, Armenians, Jews &c." were present.²⁹

The brilliant social life at the Swedish Palace would not withstand the change in political circumstances in the following years. Åkerblad's taste in theatre would undergo a similar radical change; the plays he preferred at the Théâtre Montansier in Paris around the year 1800 were distinctly less edifying. Even assuming that his letters to Gjörwell were written to suit the receiver's taste and not forgetting that Gjörwell knew Åkerblad's family, they do at times communicate a youthful *naïveté* that is absent later.

²⁷ Monnier, diary entries, 2 March 1785, 4 January, 24 February 1786, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vailland, Bourg-en-Bresse. Joseph Gabriel Monnier de Courtois (1745–1818). Jacques Paviot, "Les voyages de Joseph Gabriel Monnier (1745–1818) : Un officier du génie bressan à travers quelques événements de la fin du XVIII^e siècle," *Les Nouvelles Annales de l'Ain*, 1982; Pierre Pinon, "Un épisode de la réception des progrès techniques à Constantinople : l'échec de la mission Ferregeau, ingénieur des Ponts-et-Chaussées (1796–1799)," in *De la révolution française à la Turquie d'Atatürk. La modernisation politique et sociale. Les lettres, les sciences et les arts, Varia Turcica XVI*, ed. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Edhem Eldem (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990), 74.

²⁸ Andrei Pippidi, "Drogmans et enfants de langue : La France de Constantinople au XVII^e siècle," in *Istanbul et les langues Orientales*, ed. Frédéric Hitzel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997), 139.

²⁹ Monnier, diary entry, 6 February 1785, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vailland, Bourg-en-Bresse.

A recent biographer justly pointed out that: “The voice of the past is that of an adult and almost always male.”³⁰ Åkerblad is no exception to this rule. His interactions with women and the importance of female participation in his social life during his early adulthood can only be inferred. Women were important in the social life of Constantinople. Not everyone agreed with Choiseul-Gouffier’s terse judgments on the organisers of the theatre. A Dutch acquaintance of Åkerblad’s admitted how he had been deeply in love with Anna von Heidenstam who was “renowned for her beauty, grace and kindness.”³¹ During his years in Italy, Åkerblad had several female artist and writer friends. He frequented literary salons hosted by women and read and defended, for instance, the late Swedish ambassador’s to Paris ex-wife, the famous writer who was then known under the name of Madame de Staël.

We know nothing of Åkerblad’s emotional or sexual life during the decades spent travelling. One could speculate but that would merely be to recount what we know about the sexual mores of European men of that time and in those places. Only when he settles in Italy do we have concrete information on his relationships with women. Åkerblad never married, and could not have, within the social circles that he frequented. His company and learning were appreciated but he was, after all, a craftsman’s son and, to boot, from a poor country with little influence on European affairs. His mostly precarious circumstances also made it impossible for him to run a household. In Rome Åkerblad gained fame as a ladies’ man and his own letters mention both his own and others’ relationships (see further p. 333ff.).

When the relationship went sour between Åkerblad and a superior in Constantinople in the mid 1790s he was accused of several character deficiencies, among them that he acted above his station as a lowly secretary: “He goes out at night with torches while all Ministers and even Ambassadors themselves do not use anything but lanterns to light their way. This trait alone characterizes him.”³² This accusation was one of many in a protracted battle, of which an account is given below, but it begs the

³⁰ Willem Frijhoff, “Experience and Agency at the Crossroads of Culture, Mentality, and Contextualization: The Biography of Everhardus Bogardus (c. 1607–1647),” in *Biographie schreiben*, ed. Hans Erich Bödeker (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003), 67.

³¹ Dedem, *Un général hollandais*, 17.

³² Mouradgea d’Ohsson to Fredrik Sparre, 10 January 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA.

question whether it should not be read as a reference to amorous nocturnal activities: where was Åkerblad going at such late hours anyway?

As the playbill worded by Choiseul-Gouffier made clear, sarcastically or not, fear of the plague was a great concern for the inhabitants of Constantinople. Åkerblad often wrote about it, which is understandable considering the high mortality of his predecessors. The plague often appears to be a collective name for fears of malady and death. The risks should not be trivialized. When Åkerblad wrote of how he had “braved thousands of dangers” it was a realistic description in many ways.³³ In a letter a few years before Åkerblad’s arrival in Constantinople Björnsthål expressed his own fears in an almost apocalyptic vision:

This is a strange country; when one infliction wanes, another rises: barely we were told that the Plague was declining than we could feel how the earth was trembling and shaking, that War and Strife begins; that Fires, Rebelions, Insurrections, Manslaughter and Murder, Barbarism, Aristocracy and Anarchy, how the Following of the Devil reigns the country. God help us.³⁴

The cyclical outbreaks of the plague, especially during the summer months, often governed Åkerblad’s movements and are frequently mentioned in his letters. The many references to the plague can also be explained by the fact that the years of his first sojourn in Constantinople and his travels in the Eastern Mediterranean coincided with a major outbreak. An especially strong epidemic ravaged the Empire from 1784–86 (Figure 11). This outbreak recurred in 1791–92, coinciding with Åkerblad’s second period in Constantinople.³⁵ He thus witnessed two major epidemics during his years in Ottoman territories.

The common tactic when trying to avoid the plague was either to leave town for the countryside or to barricade oneself indoors. The diplomatic community left the city during the summers, both for reasons of climate and to escape the plague. The Swedish mission usually retreated to the village of Büyükdere on the Bosphorus, close to the outlet on the Black Sea.

When travelling outside of the capital it was difficult to keep the situation under control. Åkerblad’s colleague Erik Bergstedt, travelling in Turkey in the mid-1790s, described an incident:

³³ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 24 August 1786, Aleppo, no. 25, Ep G 7:15, KB.

³⁴ 16 August 1778, Björnsthål, *Resa*, 3:137.

³⁵ Daniel Panzac, *La peste dans l’empire ottoman 1700–1850* (Leuven: Peeters, 1985), 195ff., 608, 626.



Figure 11. The extent of the plague in 1784–86, shown by the shaded areas. The epidemic was among the most serious of the century. Map after Panzac, *Peste dans l'empire ottoman*, 608.

When I rode back to Smyrna I met some Turks carrying a plague corpse to the burial ground close by the city. I could not see them until I was very close to them because they were hidden by a garden wall. A few minutes later I could not have avoided meeting them on a narrow bridge, where we could not have passed without touching each other.³⁶

News of the plague was a determining factor when deciding how and where to travel. During Åkerblad's travels, itineraries and modes of transport often changed according to outbreaks of the plague. The threat of spending months in quarantine was an additional factor to be taken into account when visiting plague-stricken areas. Villoison similarly stressed the perils of the Levant when he wrote to a friend from the quarantine Lazaretto in Marseille: "Despite the troubles of the Lazaretto which I suffer now, I would still be disposed to brave the plague, the sea and the other scourges of the Levant, to make a rich harvest [of manuscripts]."³⁷

³⁶ Bergstedt, *Resa till Propontiden*, 1:238.

³⁷ Villoison to Pierre-Michel Hennin, 24 November 1786, from the quarantine in Marseille, in Joret, *D'Anse de Villoison*, 297.

Local customs in relation to the plague were also often cited as an example of the fatalism that was associated with Islam. Another calamity often discussed between the foreign inhabitants of Constantinople was fire. The city was predominately built of wood and fires often ravaged large parts of the capital. Fires damaged the Swedish legation on several occasions, and the main building eventually burned to the ground in 1818.

Health and the fear of illness were common themes in the correspondence of Åkerblad and his acquaintances; nevertheless Åkerblad seems to have enjoyed good health. Later, when there is frequent mention of venereal diseases he appears to have been spared, and not because he did not expose himself. However, illness is ever present—writing to a friend Åkerblad pitied her partner for his gout and added ironically: “the gout . . . this illness of rich and prosperous folks, and which, as a consequence, never will be mine.”³⁸

³⁸ JDÅ to Louise von Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome. Åkerblad's letters to Stolberg (Fonds Albany, Ms 62 A 24 (1–3), Bibliothèque municipale, Montpellier) are perfectly published and will be referred to in the printed edition: Louise von Stolberg, *Le Portefeuille de la Comtesse d'Albany (1806–1824)*, ed. Léon-G. Pélissier (Paris: Fontemoing, 1902), (hereafter *Albany*), 133.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRAVEL IN THE EAST

As soon as Åkerblad had learned the local languages he started to explore the possibilities of funding his first major trip in Ottoman territories. Heidenstam was impressed by Åkerblad, who “through industry and indefatigable work, during the short time he has spent here, already made such remarkable progress in the Turkish language and the part of Arabic that can be learnt here.”¹ Heidenstam tried to get permission and funds for Åkerblad’s trip less than a year after his arrival in March 1784. He outlined the programme and the benefits of such a voyage:

[Åkerblad aims to go] either to some place in Egypt or preferably to the mountain Lebanon where a comprehensive knowledge of Arabic can be obtained with less danger, greater concentration and at a more tolerable cost. He wishes furthermore to spend some time at the coast of Barbary to learn the dialects, from where he within not more than three years can return to the fatherland equipped with all the knowledge pertaining to Oriental learning.²

The rationale given by Heidenstam for Åkerblad’s trip was that it would benefit Sweden. Åkerblad’s travels may appear similar to a *Bildungsreise* or a Grand Tour in the sense that his movements were dictated by the quest for knowledge, but there the resemblance stops. Åkerblad’s attempt to describe his own quest for knowledge as something useful for the government distinguished his trip from the Grand Tour or the academic peregrinations that were predominately individual enterprises in a context of upper-class education and sociability.

Björnsthåhl’s father was a second lieutenant, Bergstedt’s a vicar, while Åkerblad’s was a moderately well-to-do craftsman. The social extraction of the Swedish travellers was much humbler than that of the common grand tourist’s and they were in one way or another sponsored by the government, or as in the case of the Linnaean disciples, through the universities and the Royal Academy of Science. These entities, the government and the learned institutions were not always easily distinguishable. The

¹ Heidenstam to Chancery President, 26 January 1785, Turcica 62, SNA.

² Ibid.

universities were under direct royal supervision and this was especially true of Uppsala in the 1780s when Gustav III took a direct interest in its administration. The role of the diplomatic mission in Constantinople for Swedish investigations in the Near East was also important.³

Åkerblad probably used the example of Björnsthåhl to model his own requests for funds. While thanking Gjörwell for a medal depicting Björnsthåhl, Åkerblad wrote explicitly about the prospect of following his example: "The gift of blessed Björnsthåhl's medal that the Assessor has graciously sent is very welcome as it gives me proof of both the Assessor's appreciation for me as well as a reminder to follow in Björnsthåhl's footsteps."⁴

Åkerblad had great problems finding financing and tried in various ways to convince his superiors of the utility of his endeavours. The argument he most commonly employed to justify his travelling was that his knowledge would benefit the Swedish state. Sometimes it is difficult to understand, as it might have been for Åkerblad's superiors, how his knowledge could in any practical sense be of benefit to the Swedish nation. As he himself noted, very few Swedes had undertaken journeys similar to his. In this sense the Swedes were different from the French or the English, the two nations with the most firmly rooted tradition of Eastern travel during this period. By noting the supremacy of other nations Åkerblad wanted to inspire his superiors to enter a competition between nations. Such an interpretation helps us understand his selling of his own merit as a representative of Swedish learning that boosts the nation's reputation by its sheer existence. When he later realized that this argument did not work he threatened to find employment abroad. Such 'threats' would be partly successful in the early stages of Åkerblad's career; his knowledge of Turkish and Arabic was still necessary for Swedish ambitions in Turkey. There were continuous problems with the interpreters and dragomans at the mission in Constantinople. Several observers remarked that the only way to guarantee the loyalty of the interpreters was to educate and use nationals in these sensitive positions.

Åkerblad was not immediately successful in obtaining funding. The funding of a young and unproven clerk's study trips in peripheral lands

³ Christian Callmer, "Den svenska beskickningen i Konstantinopel som utgångspunkt för forskningar i Orienten," in *Callmer*, 47–55; Nils Staf, *De svenska legationspredikanterna i Konstantinopel* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977); Åsa Karlsson, "Centrum för kunskap och kontakter. Den svenska legationen i Konstantinopel under 1700-talet," *Dragomanen*, 2000, 13–32.

⁴ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 26 January 1785, Constantinople, no. 13, Ep G 7:12, KB.

did not strike Stockholm as a core priority, however talented Åkerblad may have been. Eventually, some of the money that Åkerblad received for his first trip to Constantinople was paid by the Convoy Office [Konvojkommissariatet], an agency set up to protect Swedish shipping which was responsible for managing relations with the Barbary States.⁵

It was only during the second half of the eighteenth century that Greece started to be included in the standard itinerary of Mediterranean travels. Åkerblad was well aware of the exceptionality of his trips in the Swedish context. He remarked after his return to Constantinople from the Greek archipelago: "I think, that I am the only Swede, at least in this century, that has done this voyage, and I am astounded that to these so remarkable places, that are so frequently visited by learned Frenchmen and Englishmen, so seldom travellers from our nation come."⁶

In the following years several Swedes visited the area. Åkerblad's superior at the Constantinople mission in the early 1790s, Pehr Olof von Asp (1745–1808), published a travelogue in 1805, which describes Asp's voyage from Constantinople to Italy.⁷ In the following decades a few travellers published accounts of their trips to both the Greek archipelago and the Near East and some of them cite Åkerblad when writing about their own trips. The learned Swedish circles with 'Mediterranean' interests comprised a restricted number of individuals and most likely they all knew about Åkerblad's journeys and publications.

The inclusion of Greece and the Near East in the Grand Tour itinerary was a process that took place throughout the eighteenth century in Great Britain. The wars were one of the most important factors that changed the itineraries; British subjects could not visit France and Italy at the end of the century. Interest in British activities in India rose steadily during the second half of the century and returning Brits fuelled additional curiosity. Many commentators have convincingly argued how important the increased travelling of British subjects was for knowledge of the East. The large amount of travel literature that resulted changed perceptions and paved the way for British colonial expansion. When criticizing the Italian Sestini's books on Turkey Åkerblad expressed his opinion that English-language travel literature was the most attractive. This is a telling testimony to the quantity and quality of British travelogues.

⁵ Johan Henrik Kreüger, *Sveriges förhållanden till barbaresk staterna i Afrika*, 2 vols. (Stockholm, 1856), 2:15; Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs*.

⁶ JDÅ to Gjörrwell, 12 November 1785, Chios, no. 155, Ep G 7:13, KB.

⁷ [Asp, Pehr Olof von], *Resa i Levanten år 1796* (Skara, 1805). German edition 1822. MS X 407, UUL.

When Åkerblad later met Villoison in 1785 during his trip to the archipelago, the difference between Åkerblad's fight for scanty Swedish funding to finance his trips and Villoison's situation was obvious. Villoison was awarded travelling funds by a royal decree and obtained other monies in addition to an already generous sum.⁸ The interests of France and Britain in the Mediterranean were growing and many of the travelogues reflect this. The area was growing in importance both for commerce and as a gateway to territories further east.

The absence of travellers from other countries is conspicuous. There was, for instance, virtually no tradition of Germans travelling to Greece. Whilst being great promoters of ancient Greek culture, Germans were not compelled to visit Greece. Most famous is the case of the art-historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann who never travelled further than Italy. The only substantial German travelogue from Greece before 1800 is Winckelmann's friend Johann Hermann von Riedesel's *Remarques d'un voyageur moderne au Levant*.⁹

Attempts to connect eighteenth-century travellers directly to colonial expansionism have met with various degrees of success. It is impossible, for example, to disregard the mapping of military precision undertaken by Choiseul-Gouffier's team in the waters between Greece and Turkey (Figure 12).

The mapmaking met with local resistance and in Rhodes the local 'Turks' prohibited the making of a map of the city.¹⁰ Contemporary observers had no doubts about the French government's expansionist intentions. The Ottoman government was well aware of France's mapmaking activities and also used them for its own purposes. French engineers and mapmakers were requested to present a map of the African coast and especially a good map of the Red Sea in March 1785. This can very well have been in preparation for the Ottoman navy's expedition to Egypt in 1786.¹¹

⁸ Joret, *D'Ansse de Villoison*, 263.

⁹ Amsterdam, 1773. Åkerblad had read Riedesel's other books and copied a passage on Phoenician inscriptions in Malta from Riedesel's *Voyage en Sicile et dans la Grande Grèce* (Lausanne, 1773); Vat. lat., fol. 31r. David Constantine, *Early Greek Travellers and the Hellenic Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984).

¹⁰ Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1:111. The mapping is described but without explicit military allusions in: Catherine Hofmann, "Le voyage pittoresque de la Grèce du comte de Choiseul-Gouffier (1782–1822): La carte au service de la découverte archéologique," in *Geschichtsdeutung auf alten Karten: Archäologie und Geschichte*, ed. Dagmar Unverhau (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

¹¹ Monnier, diary entry 4 March 1785, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vaillant, Bourg-en-Bresse.

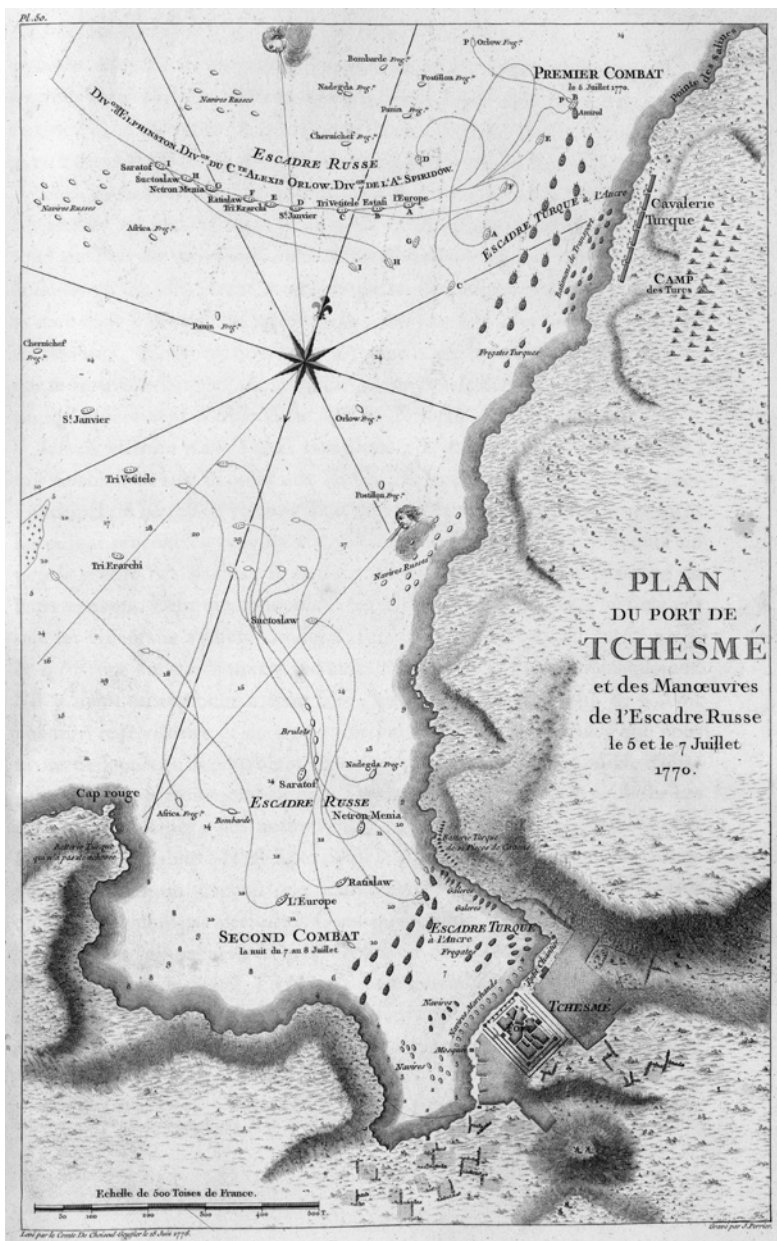


Figure 12. A map from Choiseul-Gouffier's *Voyage pittoresque*, 1: pl. 50. It depicts the battle of Çesme between the Russian and Ottoman navy on the Turkish Ionian coast opposite Chios in 1770. As with some other maps in the *Voyage pittoresque*... it gives detailed information of depth, moorings etc. It is understandable that such mapmaking raised suspicions of France's military intentions. UUL.

There is little consistency to be observed in Swedish attitudes towards the East. It is far easier to establish a connection between the growing interest of British and French travellers and that of their respective nations. Björn-ståhl began his study trips on the explicit command of the king while a few years later Åkerblad had great trouble finding money or approval for his travels. French scholars had it easier when it came to financing, and many Brits managed to get sponsorship either from rich patrons or from learned societies.

In addition to the competition in the quest for knowledge Åkerblad was also aware that commerce with the East was of prime importance to Britain and France. He wrote about how the Brits earlier gained a foothold in the Caspian Sea:

During the 1744 war between France and England the latter profited from its liaisons with Russia to obtain the permission to establish direct commerce and English navigation with Persia on the Caspian sea—The captains Elton and Woodruf had boats built on the Volga... He [Nadir Shah] employed Captain Elton who built a fleet for Nadir on this sea and became its admiral. The Policy of all European cabinets.¹²

The final phrase—and the beginning of title of the book where he found the information—is the key in our context; all European countries were striving for commercial and territorial gains to secure trade and communications in the East.¹³ The diplomatic machinations in Constantinople made it obvious to everyone what was at stake. Åkerblad and his superiors were well aware of the ambitions of England and France while their main concern was to deal with the acutely felt Russian threat to Sweden's territories.

Åkerblad was also a keen observer of British and French 'cultural' ambitions—this is evident in his comments on the removal of Greek artefacts by the British and French representatives in Constantinople and Athens (see p. 171ff). Many of the worries of both the Ottoman government officials and the diplomatic community in Constantinople would be proven well-founded. During the next decade France and Britain eventually made their intentions clear and employed large-scale military power to further their interests in the Mediterranean.

Heidenstam's request for permission for Åkerblad's travels was sent in late January 1785 and as summer arrived no answer had reached

¹² Vat. lat., fol. 16v. Åkerblad owned the Persian history of Nadir Shah (around 1688–1747) by Muhammad Mahdi Astrabadi, Vat. lat., fol. 74r, no. 43.

¹³ J.-L. Favier, *Politique de tous les cabinets de l'Europe pendant les règnes de Louis XV et de Louis XVI...*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1793–94), 1:342f.

Constantinople. In the beginning of July Heidenstam wrote again and informed Stockholm that he had let Åkerblad leave on a trip:

to visit the town of Bursa and the mountain Olympus in Bithynia, from where he intended to continue through Minor Asia to Smyrna, Ephesus and the islands in the Archipelago. I have not felt it my duty to deny him this request, especially as he has very little left to learn here in his subjects, and that if he would stay here any longer would lose precious time and the rare occasion to make such a trip with comfort and reasonable cost in the company of Count Chabannes, Marquis de Choiseul-Meuse and some other French gentlemen, that on my request invited him on their trip.¹⁴

That Åkerblad was not happy in Constantinople is clear from Heidenstam's justification for a trip he not only consented to but actively arranged. He explained why he let Åkerblad leave: "Such diversion also became necessary for Mr Åkerblad, as he has recently been tormented by melancholia and a feeling of discomfort, the unpleasant consequences of which are best prevented in this way."¹⁵

As usual it was necessary to take independent decisions at the mission—slow mail and the reluctance in Stockholm to deal with unpleasant issues gave great autonomy to the personnel when choices had to be made. Heidenstam had recently granted a similar permission for travel. The legation chaplain Adolf Fredrik Sturzenbecker had left for a trip to Greece the year before, in February 1784. Sturzenbecker died during his trip and the news of his demise reached the mission in July 1784 when Åkerblad had been in Constantinople for only a few months.

At Heidenstam's behest the Porte issued a passport for Åkerblad and a servant in June 1785.¹⁶ It named the cities of Brussa, Salonica, Jerusalem and Baghdad and the province of Egypt. The destination of Baghdad is intriguing. We have no sources that mention Åkerblad's intentions to travel further East but it might have been part of his programme as he did, for instance, want to visit Palmyra although he never succeeded in doing so.

Åkerblad left Constantinople in July 1785, well aware of the dangers of travelling, and wrote to Gjörwell in November from the Aegean island Scio:

¹⁴ Heidenstam to Chancery Board, 9 July 1785, Turcica 62, SNA. In addition to "Okreblann," Sestini, the astronomer Tondou, an Englishman and an Italian nobleman also joined the party. Monnier, diary entry, 4 July 1785, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vailland, Bourg-en-Bresse.

¹⁵ Heidenstam to Chancery Board, 9 July 1785, Turcica 62, SNA.

¹⁶ MS Dorn 543/49, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg. See also figure 32 and plate 11. Bernhard Dorn and Reinhold Rost, *Catalogue des manuscrits et xylographes orientaux de la Bibliothèque impériale publique de Saint-Petersbourg* (St. Petersburg, 1852), 496.

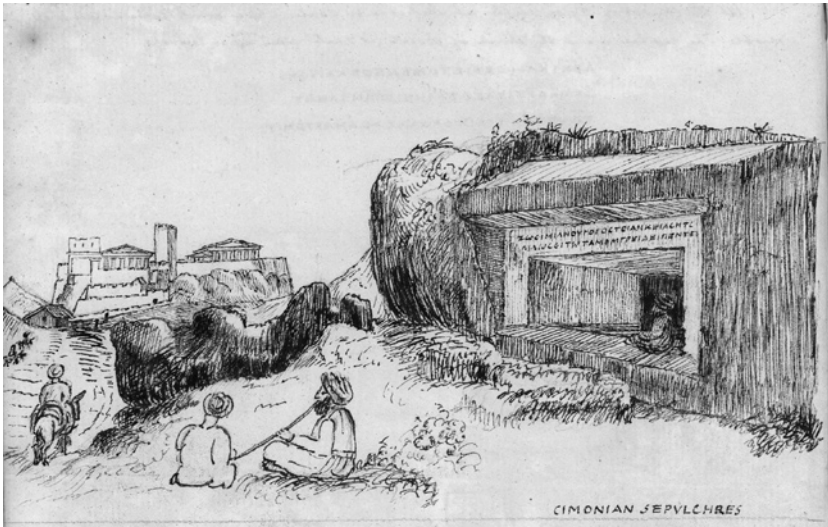


Figure 13. A view of the Acropolis and the so-called Cimonian Sepulchres from Åkerblad's notebook. Fol. 61v, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.

It was in the beginning of the month of July that I left Constantinople by sea in the company of a French Count Mr de Chabannes. We left our ship at the Dardanelles to visit the coast of Troy. From there we went to Tenedos, Imbros, Lemnos, Mount Athos, one of the most beautiful and interesting places in Greece. Further on to Scyros, Andros, Tine, Syra, Miconi. From Miconi we went to Athens, where I only stayed a week, since I hoped to return there. I do not have to tell you Sir with what pleasure I saw Athens which has been Theatre of so remarkable events and the fatherland of such great men and that still displays the most beautiful monuments of antiquity. I am still full of regret for not being able to return there. From Athens we turned back to Miconi and visited the closely situated Delos which is so famous for the temple of Apollo whereof some remains are still visible, from there we went to Paros, Antiparos and Naxia where I met our common friend Mr Ansse de Villosion. My travel companion left from here to Smyrna while I stayed in Naxia more than a month to exercise talking New Greek. Mr de Villosion will probably spend the winter there.¹⁷

This trip was Åkerblad's first chance to visit the sites of Greek antiquity and his enthusiasm for the classical heritage is obvious (Figure 13). He continued his language studies. One of his main occupations was to improve his knowledge of the Greek spoken in the area. Learning and

¹⁷ JDÅ to Gjörwell 12 November 1785, no. 155, Ep G 7:13, KB.



Figure 14. Some of the places Åkerblad visited on his tour of the archipelago in 1785.

teaching Modern Greek and its relationship with ancient Greek would interest Åkerblad until his death. Villosion ended up spending almost two years travelling in the archipelago.¹⁸

After Åkerblad had left Villosion at Naxos he informed Gjörwell about his immediate plans: “From Naxia I went again to Tine and from there to

¹⁸ Villosion's diary and notes have recently been published. *De l'Hellade a la Grèce. Voyage en Grèce et au Levant, 1784–1786*, ed. Etienne Fumerie (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006).

Chios where I arrived two weeks ago. In a few days I will leave for Smyrna or Constantinople to find a ship bound for some place in Syria. Yes, these have been my occupations during the summer.”¹⁹ He and Villoison would stay in contact over the coming years and Åkerblad visited him in Paris on his trip back to Sweden in 1789.

Åkerblad did not realize his intention to travel to Syria but returned to Constantinople (Figure 14). It was during this trip that Åkerblad started to collect artefacts and inscriptions on a modest scale.

Aleppo, Lebanon and Palestine

The request for permission and funds for his study-tour had not yet been granted by Stockholm when Åkerblad returned to Constantinople. Heidenstam thus decided to advance Åkerblad the money needed for the trip and gave him permission to leave. When the negative answer eventually arrived Åkerblad had already left. Heidenstam’s correspondence on the matter dragged on and only after a couple of years of negotiations did Stockholm agree to pay for the trip.²⁰

Åkerblad left Constantinople in the beginning of January 1786 and commenced his first trip to the Orient overland. He gave priority to visiting ancient sites and wrote to Gjörwell:

In the beginning of January I left Constantinople, passed through a part of ancient Bithynia, Mysia, et cetera, arrived at Smyrna in the end of the same month. From there I went to the Ruins of Ephesus, Scala Nova and Samos, which I had not had the opportunity to visit during my trip in the Archipelago. From Samos I turned back to Smyrna where I stayed during the carnival. The 9th of March I started the voyage overland to Aleppo, visited Sardes which has so few remains, Konya, in times past Iconium, Adana, Antiochia; arrived here at Aleppo the 16th of April, where the plague, which had ravaged almost all of Syria, forced me to stay longer than I had intended.²¹

He continued to outline the rationale for the trip, mentioning the same reasons as those put forward by Heidenstam, with the addition of “learning the character” of the people. A letter from Heidenstam had reached

See also an earlier compilation: *Villoison in Grecia: note di viaggio (1784–1786)*, ed. Renata Lavagnini (Palermo: Istituto siciliano di studi bizantini e neoellenici, 1974).

¹⁹ JDÅ to Gjörwell 12 November 1785, no. 155, Ep G 7:13, KB.

²⁰ Heidenstam to Chancery Board, 26 June, 10 October 1786, 1 April 1788, 10 October 1788, Turcica 62, 63, SNA.

²¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 24 August 1786, Aleppo, no. 25, Ep G 7:15, KB.

him and bitterness over the fact that his aims were not understood or appreciated in Stockholm got the upper hand. He lamented:

It is with these voyages that I have believed to secure the double aim of learning the language and getting to know the country and the character of the people, which is impossible if you only reside in one place. I have also in this way flattered myself in believing that I thus win the favour of my king and fatherland. How did I not let myself be deceived? A few months ago I got through Mr Heidenstam the trite, trite remarks that the Convoy Office pleased to write about the monies Mr Heidenstam paid me . . . Thus it is not enough that I defiantly braved thousands of dangers that trips in the Levant entail . . . that I spent my inheritance, I must also have the mortification of seeing my benefactor and friend getting into trouble for my sake.²²

Åkerblad finished the letter by asking Gjörrwell if he could not try to use his influence to change the situation: "If you Sir through your relations could alleviate my destiny it could not do anything but increase my debt to Sir."²³ In a postscript he asked Gjörrwell to say nothing to his father about his troubles.

Complaints about the lack of recognition from the Swedish government would be one of the constant themes in Åkerblad's correspondence until his death in Rome in 1819. But there are relevant questions to be asked in relation to his laments and demands. Are we merely witnessing the rhetoric of the underling? A way to try to obtain advantages and favours? Or were his laments a *bona fide* expression of a real sense of bitterness and inferiority? There are few doubts that he was well aware of his merits as a language specialist and a scholar, which were time and again proven to be of no value to the government. He would eventually come to realize that his personal ambitions would not easily be joined with government service. Combining scholarly activities with state service was always difficult, even for persons of higher social extraction and of independent means.

Åkerblad was forced to stay for four months in Aleppo because of the plague and during that time his language capacities continued to impress. His host in Aleppo was the Swedish and Dutch consul van Maseyk, who told a Swedish traveller in the 1820s, almost 40 years later, "that Åkerblad knew Turkish, Persian and Arabic to such a degree of perfection that you could not distinguish his speech from that of a native."²⁴ Aleppo was at this time a centre for trade in the Eastern Mediterranean and the population

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jacob Berggren, *Resor i Europa och Österländerna*, 3 vols. (Stockholm, 1826–28), 3:96.

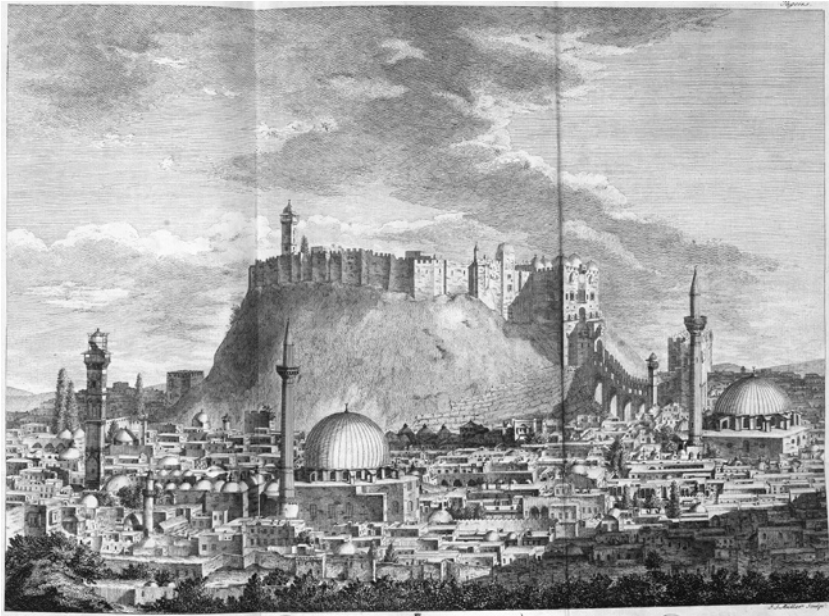


Figure 15. A view of Aleppo. Drummond, *Travels*. UUL.

of around 120,000 made it the third biggest city in the Ottoman Empire after Constantinople and Cairo (Figure 15). It was also a centre of learning with many local scholars and manuscript collectors. Åkerblad had numerous opportunities to associate and exchange opinions and information with several learned locals and foreigners.²⁵

Once the plague had abated Åkerblad moved on. He left Aleppo on 26 August 1786 and, after covering more than 150 kilometres in four days, he arrived at Al-Ladhiqiyah (Latakia, ancient Laodicea ad mare). He visited the city's antiquities and the cave tombs north of the town. He commented on the scarcity of monuments and underlined once again that they had been well-described by previous travellers: "The few antiquities

²⁵ Alexander Russel, *Natural History of Aleppo...*, 2 vols. (London, 1794), 2:95ff.; I. Y. Kratchkovsky, *Among Arabic Manuscripts: Memories of Libraries and Men* (Leiden: Brill, 1953), 75–76, 82; André Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes à l'époque ottomane* (Paris: Sindbad, 1985), 57; Maurits H. van den Boogert, "Patrick Russel and the Republic of Letters in Aleppo," in *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, ed. Alastair Hamilton, Maurits H. van den Boogert, and Bart Westerweel (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

it owns are already known through Drymond's [Drummond 1754] and other's descriptions that Sir already knows."²⁶

After spending four days at sea he arrived at Tripolis, a "fairly populous and beautiful city." Drummond was less sanguine about it: "small, nasty, irregular, and, like all other Turkish towns, meanly built."²⁷ As was often the case, Åkerblad's judgments were more favourable than those of many other travellers. Åkerblad visited mosques and spent some time in a Dervish community, a Tekkiye. He took every opportunity to visit and learn about the various religious orders and communities, be they Christian, Muslim or Jewish. On 7 September he left the coast and arrived the same day at the Monastery of Saint Anthony of Qozhaya (Mar Antun el Koshaja) situated some 30 km from the coast.

He spent a few days perusing its manuscript collection. During the next week he visited several monasteries in the area. He also commented on the local trees which he found more famous than impressive: "From Tripoli I travelled to the cedars of Lebanon. They are far more known than remarkable. The number has probably diminished. I could not count more than 12 of the biggest. There are a bigger number of the young cedars; they look quite like our spruces."

Åkerblad left the mountains and arrived on 13 September at Baalbek, ancient Heliopolis, site of one of the most impressive Roman ruins of the Eastern Mediterranean: "I spent with delight several days admiring them, that is surely the most beautiful Roman Architecture we know." As usual he was concise when describing monuments and referred to Wood's illustrated book.²⁸ He did not manage to visit Palmyra as he had planned; according to his letter there were too many obstacles. Travelling alone was unsafe and waiting for another party or finding competent guides was not always possible.

After exploring the plains he returned to the hills to visit the monastery of Mar Yohanna where the Maronite patriarch resided. He stayed a week there before spending eight days in the Mar Elias monastery a few kilometres to the west. He visited most monasteries in the area looking for manuscripts (Figure 16). He also took some time to see natural curiosities and look for outdoor inscriptions. In the company of two monks he descended from the monastery Mar Michel el Sok on 22 October 1786:

²⁶ This and following quotations: JDÅ to Gjörrwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 717, KB.

²⁷ Drummond, *Travels*, 130.

²⁸ Robert Wood, *The Ruins of Balbec otherwise Heliopolis, in Coelo-Syria* (London, 1757).

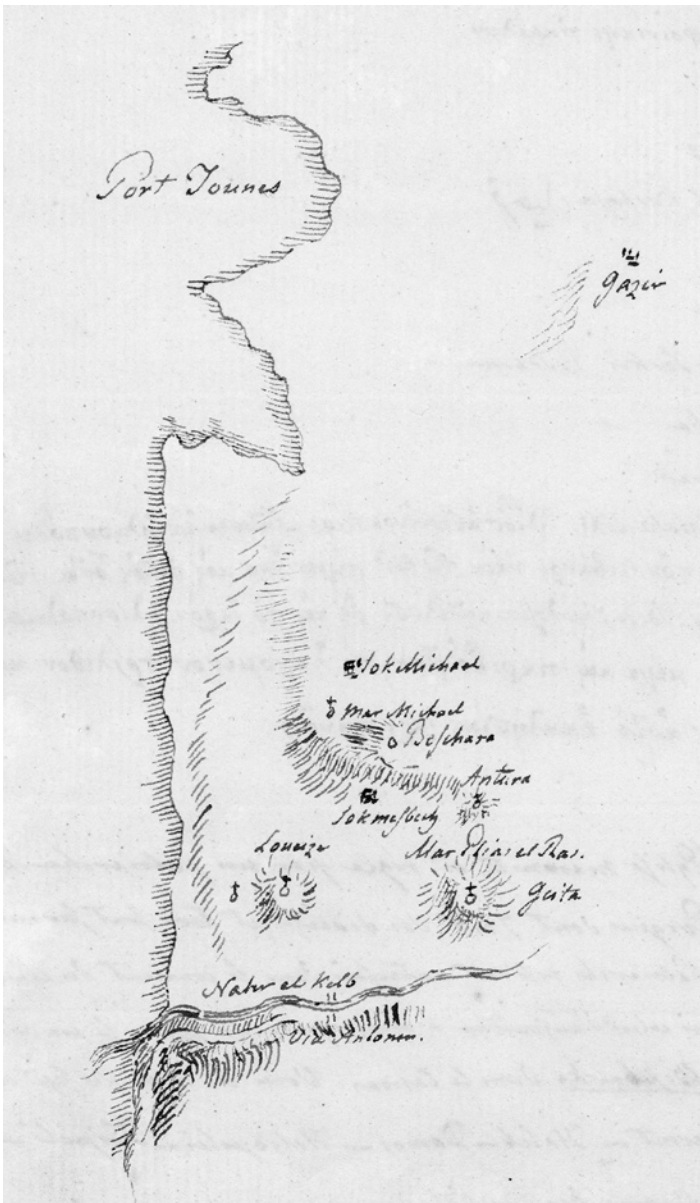


Figure 16. Map of the Lebanese coastal area from Åkerblad's notebook. Some of the monasteries he visited are marked out. Fol. 33r, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.

The descent from St. Michael is quite steep, after which follows a plain that extends to the sea. We took the road southwards. The area is fertile and a lot of sugarcane is grown here. The water from the Lycos [Nahr-el-Kalb] is conducted to these plantations. Here are also nurseries for mulberry trees. We arrived at the Lycos. On the north side are remnants of an Arabic inscription which I copied. We passed the river on foot. ... Here the road cut through the mountain begins. A Latin inscription is readable on square tablet hewn out in the rock. It is mentioned by all travellers ... In several places there are hewn tablets on the rock face, as if they were destined for inscriptions.²⁹

Åkerblad copied the inscription commemorating the passage of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus' (Caracalla) armies. The road is famous for its inscriptions celebrating many invaders, from Assyrians and Egyptians to Greeks and Romans. This is a tradition that has been upheld in modern times. Napoleon III in the 1860s, British and French forces in 1918, the French invasion of 1920 and the arrival of Australian and allied forces during the Second World War, are all commemorated on the rock walls. A few days later he went west towards the coast:

The 30 October. Rode to the Loeiza monastery to assist at the ordination of a bishop. It is the Patriarch and two Bishops that officiate. I found the ceremonies of little interest, and an appalling noise of some wild instruments ... insufferable for all but Maronite ears, almost made me leave before the end. Then we ate in a long corridor spanning the length of the monastery. More than 400 persons were fed in such a way that when the first comers to the table were satisfied, they gave up their places for the next hungry guests. This kind of corridor is called *Ruad*.

Åkerblad's appreciation of Christian rites was scant, although as many other travellers he always underlined the exemplary hospitality provided by the various orders. When he took lodgings in a Catholic nunnery the next day he stressed this:

1. November 2 o'clock in the afternoon mounted mules to make a trip to a place called Fahra, where I was assured that there were antiquities to be found. Rode past Antura, Ageltun and came after a couple of hours to a place where the shape and the way the stones were piled up resembled castles and forts. Saw several villages on the way. Passed a wide valley *Vadi el Salib* the *Cross Valley* and came after 6 ½ hours ride to *Deir el Nia* a Greek-Catholic nunnery. It is quite an imposing edifice. The nuns treated us the best they could and we stayed the night.

²⁹ This and following quotations: Vat. lat., fol. 57r.

But the principal goal of the trip was not accomplished. A couple of months touring the monasteries had not produced any results in the way of manuscripts. He wrote to Gjörwell in Stockholm, where much of the interest in the East was still centred on the possibility of finding new documents illuminating Christian history and faith. That he had not found any new texts did not come as a great surprise to him:

Around Tripoli are several Greek and Maronite monasteries, some of which I visited in the hope of finding manuscripts. This was the foremost reason for my trip to the Lebanon. I can now explain to Sir that the learned have little new to expect of that kind from there. I have minutely surveyed almost all of the book collections on the Lebanon; they only contain Syriac and Arabic breviaries and a few Arabian poets long known in Europe. A single historical work, which I believe is not known, have I had copied. It is a kind of chronicle about Lebanon and other places in Syria from the beginning of the Mohammedan epoch until 1730, written by a Maronite Patriarch Stephan. It is written in Arabic but with Syriac letters (this manner of writing is called *Karschuni*).³⁰

After he had visited a great deal of Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon Åkerblad spent some time with the Druze in order to learn about their customs. On 23 November he arrived at Acre and took lodgings with the Franciscans. The Franciscan order offered hospitality to pilgrims and travellers to the Holy Land; Åkerblad also stayed with them in Jerusalem and Nazareth.

Åkerblad made Acre his base for further excursions while he appreciated the opportunity to use the city's facilities for studying local manuscripts: "Acre, ancient Ptolemais, is expanding ever since the famous Jezar Pasha chose it as a residence. He has had a beautiful Mosque built, a library et cetera and considerably embellished the town."³¹ The local governor Jezzar Pascha (Aḥmad al-Jazzār 1720–1804) continued the work of his predecessor by fortifying and rebuilding the city. He would later become famous in the West when he successfully resisted Napoleon's siege of Acre and forced him to withdraw in 1799. Jezzar has gained the epithet

³⁰ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB. Nevertheless, according to Åkerblad's annotations (Vat. lat., fol. 24r) it appears he did find more not yet widely known texts, e.g. an extract from a historical work by Ibn Asbāt, Ḥamzah ibn Aḥmad (d. 1520), see Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 suppl. vol. (Leiden: Brill, 1938), 42, no. 15; and a medical tract by Anṭākī, Dā'ūd ibn 'Umar (d. 1599), see Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Felber, 1902), 364, no. 3, 2nd title.

³¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

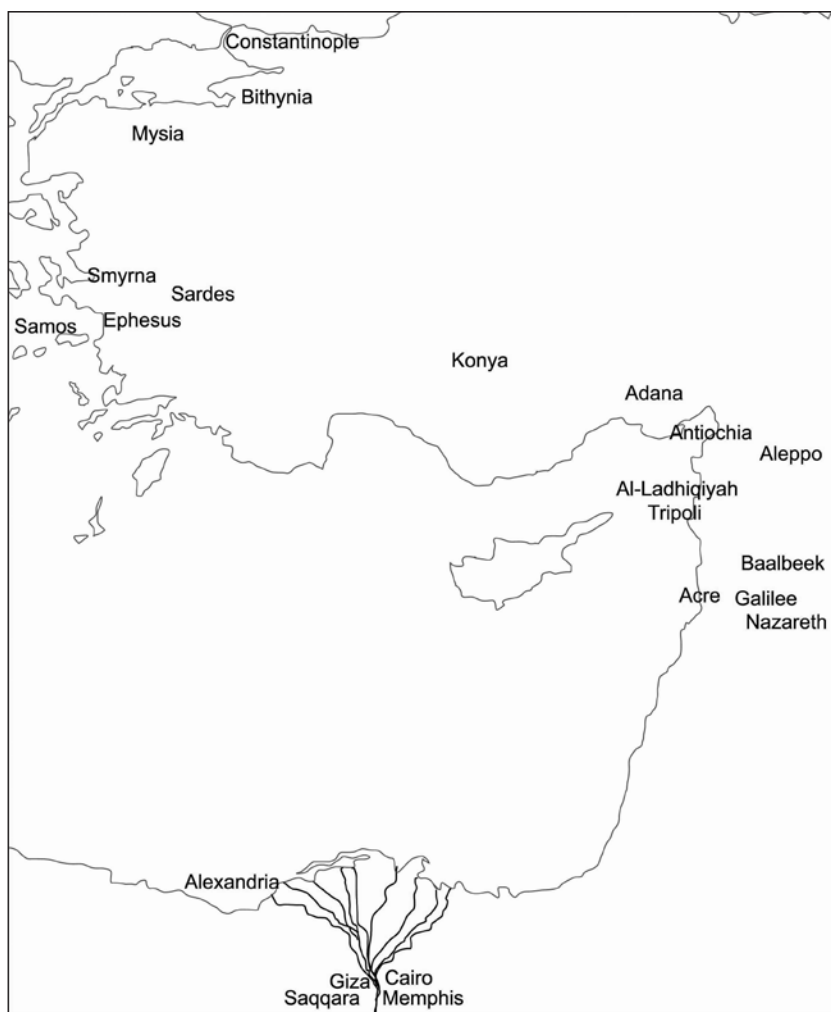


Figure 17. Åkerblad's travels in 1786–87. In April 1786 he arrived in Aleppo where he was forced to stay for 4 months because of the plague. He stayed for 7 months in Egypt in 1787.

'butcher' because of his supposed cruelty, but Åkerblad describes him as the embellisher of the city and builder of scholarly facilities (Figure 17).

Åkerblad continued his survey of the area by visiting Nazareth. In the 1820s Berggren, the same Swedish traveller who had been informed about Åkerblad's spoken Arabic, Turkish and Persian by the consul in Aleppo, found traces of Åkerblad's visit there when he stayed in the same

Franciscan monastery as Åkerblad. Berggren's meeting with the monks was a reminder that few Swedes travelled to the Holy Land:

Padre Guardiano or the Superior himself had never heard about Sweden and declared that no country with that name existed, before I showed him on one of the maps hanging in the monastery corridors where *Suezia*, high up close to Poland, is situated. When he asked me what religion is observed in this unknown country and he heard that only Protestants live there he pitied me and said: *anderete all'inferno* [you will go to hell] while another monk hit Suezia with his fist so that the map trembled. Otherwise I was never badly treated, quite the reverse, I was always hospitably and well treated in the monasteries without ever being bothered about my faith and confession. In one of the vaults of the stair leading to the roof terrace the name of *Jan Mannerfeldt*, *Svecus* was carved, not far away that of *Åkerblad*, with the year 1786.³²

By 4 December Åkerblad was back in Acre, where he stayed for a fortnight studying in the library of the mosque. On 17 December he was on the road again: "I have made several small trips in the Galilee and Samaria, . . . seen the mountain Tabor, the lake Genesaret [sea of Galilee], Emmaus, Cana in the Galilee, the mountain Carmel, Caesarea et cetera. Sir has read hundreds of descriptions of these places. I was unhappy at not being able to go to Jerusalem because of the still ongoing plague."³³ His intention to visit Jerusalem and spend Christmas there was thwarted and he turned back to Acre where he arrived on 22 December. As usual he investigated antiquities and manuscripts in private collections and anything bearing unknown letters especially attracted his attention. He found an engraved stone and drew it in his notebook: "I saw an engraved stone in St Jean d'Acre with the inscription here above. The letters appear to be Sassanid. The owner of the stone, a French merchant, was convinced that the figure is that of Nebuchadnezzar metamorphosed into an animal."³⁴ Åkerblad stayed in Acre and its surrounding areas until the middle of January 1787. On 16 January he boarded a Venetian ship bound for Alexandria, where he arrived on 28 January 1787.

³² Berggren, *Resor*, 2:335.

³³ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

³⁴ Vat. lat., fol. 30v; Thomasson, *Between Rome and Orient*, 502.

CHAPTER FIVE

WAR IN EGYPT

The chances that Åkerblad would meet compatriots in Alexandria were slim. Swedish trade with Egypt was at a low point. Only one Swedish ship visited Alexandria in the 1780s. The previous decade had seen about three ships visit Alexandria every year. The low numbers were another sign of the political unrest in the area.¹

Åkerblad spent almost seven months in Egypt and his stay made a lasting impression on him. When he arrived in Alexandria on 28 January 1787 Egypt was at war. The situation in the 1780s was a culmination of the long history of disagreements between local rulers in Egypt and central government in Constantinople. By 1784 the Egyptian historian al-Jabartī (1753–1825) described the situation as follows: “the land turned to waste, highway robbery flourished, marauders indulged in looting, security was non-existent and the roads were impassable except with protective escort, then at a dangerous risk. The peasants abandoned their villages because of the lack of irrigation and because of the oppression.”²

The *de facto* leaders of Egypt were the shaykh al-balad, ‘the commander of the city [of Cairo],’ Ibrahim Bey and the amir al-hājj, ‘the leader of the Mecca pilgrimage caravan’ Murad Bey. Both were Mameluks of Georgian origin belonging to the Quazdağlı household and had ruled in an uneasy duumvirate since the late 1770s, holding the most important offices of the city and province. Both their and the previous governors’ management of Egypt had displeased the rulers in Constantinople. Egypt had been riven by several conflicts during the eighteenth century. Internal strife between factions, the excessive taxation of both local inhabitants and foreign residents, and reluctance to follow decisions from the capital were some of the grievances of the Porte.³

¹ Gustaf Erik Lundstedt, *Anteckningar öfver Egyptens handel och dess näringars tillstånd; jemte reflexioner öfver nordiska handeln med Egypten. Åren 1822, 1823 och 1824* (Stockholm, 1825), 99.

² ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jabartī, *‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Jabartī’s History of Egypt: ‘Ajā’ib al- āthār fi ‘l-tarājim wa-‘l-akhbār*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Moshe Perlmann, 5 vols. in 3 t. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994), 2:139.

³ Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1997).

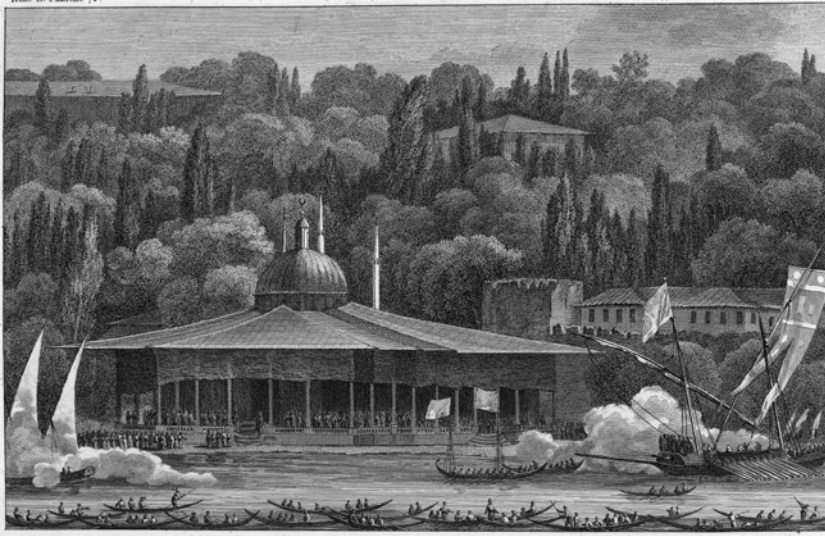


Figure 18. The Capitan Pasha Hasan saluting the sultan before leaving Constantinople for the campaign in Egypt. On the same night the diplomatic community attended an opera performance at the Swedish Palace. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 2:2, pl. 75. UUL.

In 1786 the Porte sent a military expedition to bring Egypt back under Ottoman control (Figure 18). The forces arrived in Alexandria in July and then marched to Cairo. One of the many reasons for the Porte's intervention was the treatment of the foreign community in Alexandria. Foreign representatives in Constantinople had demanded that something be done; one such petition was presented to the sultan in early March 1786.⁴

The rulers Murad and Ibrahim fled to Upper Egypt when Ottoman forces marched on Cairo. Upper Egypt remained under their control while the Porte reinstated direct rule in Lower Egypt under the naval commander Ghazi Hasan Pascha and a new shaykh al-balad. In addition to civil war Egypt was also afflicted by the plague and had recently suffered several years of low Nile water with bad harvests and increasing prices as a consequence. Åkerblad explained the situation:

In the beginning of 1787 I left Syria and went by sea to Alexandria. I had not chosen a happy time to visit Egypt. Sir knows the unrest that for so long

⁴ Monnier, diary entry 7 March 1786, MS 63, Fonds Joseph Gabriel Monnier, Médiathèque E. & R. Vailland, Bourg-en-Bresse.

has devastated it as well as with what outcome the Turkish chief admiral has made use of the discord of the Egyptian beys to at least for a time make them recognize the supremacy of the Porte. I came to Egypt when the war was raging.⁵

Åkerblad's premonition was right; direct rule by Constantinople was only successful for a few years. Central control of the territory was patchy and the situation continued to be marked by insecurity. Only Cairo seems to have been largely under government control. On the same day that Åkerblad arrived in Alexandria a rumour spread in Cairo that a major victory had been won against the rebelling Beys in the south. This was proven to be false and the war against Murad and Ibrahim continued.

Åkerblad was well-informed about the political situation. He lived among the foreign community in Alexandria and was able to communicate freely with the inhabitants. Alexandria was at this time a city of about 20,000 inhabitants and no more than 150 European residents. Åkerblad saw the usual sites. He visited the Pillar of Pompey (a column erected in honour of Diocletian) and the Coptic churches. He also saw the obelisks, one of which is now in London, the so-called Cleopatra's Needle by the Thames, and the other one which is now in Central Park in New York. Later he ventured to the catacombs.⁶ In a rock tomb he might have seen the earlier Swedish botanist traveller Fredric Hasselquist's name inscribed as Erik Bergstedt did a few years later: "It said Fred Hasselquist. Suecus. M.D. A.D. MDCCL. I wrote my name beside his, but I hope that I am luckier than him, and shall have the pleasure of seeing my friends at home again."⁷ Hasselquist died in Smyrna in 1752.

Åkerblad left Alexandria for Rashid [Rosetta] on 16 February. Rashid was the most important harbour in Egypt until the early-nineteenth century. It was here that the French army found the Rosetta Stone twelve years later. Despite Åkerblad's awareness of the risk of travelling onwards he decided to continue: "It nevertheless did not stop me from going to Cairo but cautiousness did not allow me to go further."⁸ Leaving Rashid in the middle of the night of 23 February he sailed up the Nile to Cairo writing down the names of the villages he passed.

⁵ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

⁶ Note in N72, KB, where Åkerblad lists what he has seen in Egypt: "catacomber, obelisque, Pyramider m.m. [etc.]."

⁷ Bergstedt to Nils von Rosenstein, 12 June 1795, at sea between Stanchio and Samos, F 651 a, UUL.

⁸ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

On 1 March he arrived in Cairo, that with 250–300,000 inhabitants had been the Ottoman Empire's second city for centuries. The French census of 1798 stated the population was 263,000. At this time there were fewer European residents in Cairo than in Alexandria. In 1774 they numbered only 72 and out of these 44 were French. The foreign community was certainly even smaller during the tumultuous 1780s.⁹

It is interesting to note that Åkerblad's first experiences of big cities were the three biggest cities of the Ottoman Empire: Constantinople, Cairo and Aleppo. What he had seen so far in Europe did not compare to the great Ottoman capitals. He only visited Paris and London after his first journeys to the Eastern Mediterranean. Erik Bergstedt, who came to Cairo a few years after Åkerblad and had worked in Paris, compared its size to the French capital: "Cairo appears somewhat smaller than Paris to me." He was not sure how many inhabitants the city had but thought it could not be more than 400,000.¹⁰

Åkerblad stayed in Cairo for as long as he could: "I spent 4 months in Cairo. It is there that one has the best opportunities to occupy oneself with Arabic literature."¹¹ A degree of caution should be exercised as to the extent to which the recent conflicts affected the intellectual life of the city. By focusing exclusively on these difficulties, one risks joining the secular choir highlighting the decline of Ottoman cities and culture in particular and Muslim culture in general. New research has recently done much to nuance and rectify the image of decline in the eighteenth century.¹²

Åkerblad surely gained access to the important institutions of learning. The most famous of these was the Al-Azhar mosque and university—founded in the tenth century—with its large collections of manuscripts. The organisation and richness of the Al-Azhar library, and the literary treasures held within, are described by the Russian Arabist I. Y. Kratchkovsky.

⁹ Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes*, 115.

¹⁰ Bergstedt to Rosenstein, 12 May 1795, Alexandria, F 651 a, UUL.

¹¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

¹² Nelly Hanna's survey of literary culture and learning in Ottoman Cairo makes clear that 'decline' in many ways can be dismissed: *A Cultural History of Cairo's Middle Class, Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2003). The debate on Egyptian and Ottoman 'decline' in the late eighteenth century is wide in its scope. A reassessment of both the political problems in the capital as well as the situation in the provinces is underway and new research is published continuously. For an overview see e.g. Caroline Finkel: "The Treacherous Cleverness of Hindsight: Myths of Ottoman Decay," in *Re-orienting the Renaissance: Cultural Exchanges with the East*, ed. Gerald Maclean (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). In the case of the cities of Cairo and Aleppo see e.g. Raymond, *Grandes villes arabes*, 118ff.

He gives a glimpse of the sense of discovery that a European scholar felt before the library became properly known about in western scholarly circles.¹³

Åkerblad's studies were not only of antiquarian concern. Cairo was the cultural capital of Arabic learning and while the situation for the general population was undoubtedly dire it is not certain that the facilities available to scholars were greatly affected. The city also abounded in scholarly activities outside of al-Azhar and other institutions. Seminars, discussions and debates were held at the homes of well-known scholars. The private manuscript collections of scholars often served as lending libraries for students and colleagues.¹⁴ Åkerblad continued to compile wordlists comparing different Arabic dialects. One of his annotations shows that he also came into contact with Copts and the Coptic Church while in Egypt. He noted down differences in how they spoke Arabic. "The inhabitants of Egypt, and especially the Copts, pronounce the Kaf ك almost like a gayn."¹⁵

The political situation was highly unstable, as al-Jabartī's chronicle of the months Åkerblad spent in Cairo testifies. The war in Upper Egypt had repercussions in Cairo: "On Tuesday the 16th (6 March 1787) some 30 heads of slain southerners arrived. They were thrown on a bed of date palm branches near the gate of the Citadel in Rumayla and were left there for three days before being buried."¹⁶ Cairo itself was also fraught with violence; on 9 April al-Jabartī indicated how women were especially vulnerable in the lawlessness brought on by war: "It was again announced that women should not go to the markets, the reason being the occurrence of several incidents involving women and soldiers. In one case, about 70 murdered women had been found buried in the stables at the house of a Yūsuf Bey."¹⁷ There were many incidents every month and, in addition to the political violence, al-Jabartī reported on a big gunpowder explosion and ensuing fire in June, the account of which he characteristically ended: "This was one of the most appalling calamities ever reported in chronicles—and to be an eye-witness was very different from merely

¹³ Kratchkovsky, *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, 18ff.

¹⁴ Nelly Hanna, "Culture in Ottoman Egypt," in *Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. 2: Modern Egypt, from 1517 to the end of the twentieth century*, ed. M. W. Daly (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 97ff.

¹⁵ Vat. lat., fol. 14v.

¹⁶ al-Jabartī, *History of Egypt*, 2:228.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2:230.

hearing about it.”¹⁸ The fire did not, however, engulf the city. Whilst Constantinople was predominately built of wood, Cairo was built of stone and did not suffer the regularly devastating fires of the capital.

Åkerblad embarked on the usual excursions to sites close to Cairo that were still under at least nominal central rule such as the pyramids of Giza, Saqqara and Memphis. He did not dare to venture further. Bergstedt gave a good description of the conditions for visiting the pyramids at Giza, which he had been at in the mid 1790s, in his inaugural address at the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities in Stockholm. It is worth quoting to give an idea of the security concerns raised by a brief excursion to the outskirts of Cairo. Conditions were most probably better at the time of Bergstedt's visit than when Åkerblad had stayed in Cairo, but territorial control did not extend further than the city limits:

When one intends to visit the Pyramids one usually leaves Cairo the day before, through Fostat, or old Cairo, over the Nile and the island Rhoda to Gizé, in order to early the next morning start the trip to the Pyramids, before the sun heat gets too strong. . . . Our train resembled a military expedition. We were almost 40 persons. In front were armed horsemen, a few of those always riding about to investigate whether any Arabs were to be seen; then Murad Bey's Maghrebine soldiers on donkeys; and behind these an ass carrying a sack of water, a necessary refreshment in the heat and a troop of horsemen completed the train. . . . I thought it instructive to describe this train to show the insecurity in the country.¹⁹

Åkerblad's itinerary in Egypt did not satisfy his curiosity about literary matters nor his wish to visit as many sites from both antiquity and Islamic times as possible. He expressed his frustration at not being able to spend more time in Egypt: “I had wished to be able to remain longer in Egypt which in all aspects is so remarkable but certain circumstances forced me to travel to Constantinople where I have been since September.”²⁰ These certain circumstances were a lack of money.

The disorder in Egypt continued for another couple of years. Eventually Ibrahim and Murad re-entered Cairo in August 1791 without encountering any opposition. Their property had been confiscated and Hasan Pascha had ordered that their family members be sold as slaves at auction. The second measure was considered extreme even in this ferocious conflict.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2:235.

¹⁹ Erik Bergstedt, “Inträdetal i Kongl. vitterhets-, historie- och antikvitets-academien den 1 november 1803,” *KVHAA Handlingar* 9 (Stockholm, 1811), 285–88.

²⁰ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB.

After resuming power the two Beys continued their extortive tactics and did nothing to improve the situation in Egypt. One of the reasons the French gave for invading Egypt in 1798 was to put an end to the systematic extortion of the French and foreign merchant community. When Murad Bey eventually died in 1801 al-Jabartī wrote: “He was one of the major causes of the ruination of Egypt, what with the cruelty and recklessness displayed by him and his mamluks and retainers, and his lenience towards them. Perhaps with his end these evils will cease.”²¹

Constantinople Intermission

On 15 July Åkerblad was back in Alexandria and five days later he boarded a French ship destined for Smyrna. From Smyrna he travelled overland to Constantinople where he arrived on 9 September. While he was away on this first long trip the authorities in Stockholm had finally dealt with his and Heidenstam's petitions. Åkerblad's teacher Carl Aurivillius had died in January 1786 and no one had yet been appointed to the office of Turkish interpreter. Åkerblad was finally promised the position. At the same time Heidenstam was instructed to curtail Åkerblad's voyages:

he [Heidenstam] that best knows the circumstances is to adjust and curtail the remaining travels and tour so that Åkerblad on one hand gains the necessary knowledge for an interpreter in the Turkish language here and on the other hand does not meet with the same fate as his predecessors by a too far-flung trip.²²

The government in Stockholm finally decided to support Åkerblad and even reimburse Heidenstam for his outlays. One interpretation might be that Stockholm wanted to protect its ‘investment’ and force Åkerblad to return to Sweden within a reasonable time. The mortality rate of the Swedish travellers was high; over the last few years Björnsthåhl, Schindler and Sturzenbecker had all died. It is understandable that Stockholm wanted to avoid further losses. At the same time knowledge of the increased tension in the Eastern Mediterranean and the rumours of another Russo-Turkish war made the need for oriental language-speaking personnel in Stockholm more pressing. Åkerblad was probably the only Swede at this moment with adequate knowledge for the position.

²¹ al-Jabartī, *History of Egypt*, 3:264.

²² 11 January 1787, Kanslikollegium protokoll, SNA.

As Åkerblad's pecuniary situation in Constantinople had finally improved, his intention was not to return to Stockholm immediately. He would continue his trip to Northern Africa as planned and so he implored Gjörwell to support his quest for permission to stay in Paris and London on his way back to Sweden: "I will write to the concerned to obtain permission to spend some time in France and England to use the rich reserves of oriental manuscripts. I hope this will not be denied."²³

Once Åkerblad had received permission to set out on his final trip he started to organise his travel to Northern Africa. As he could not find a ship bound directly for the Barbary coast he chose to depart on a French ship from Constantinople on 12 March 1788: "Last year I had the honour of telling Sir about my intention to visit parts of the African coast but as I did not find any suitable ships I decided to go to Alexandria, where the constant traffic to Tunis gave me hope of finding a ship ready to sail from there."²⁴

The ship for Alexandria was full of pilgrims and sailing conditions not being favourable, the voyage became slow and tortuous. The southern wind forced the ship to stop and Åkerblad went ashore to visit the surrounding areas. From Tekirdağ (Rodosto) on the northern shores of the Marmara Sea he noted: "The town is fairly big, I counted 13 minarets; it has 5 Greek churches. Poor wine is shipped from here."²⁵ Ten days later the ship managed to leave the Dardanelles and on 25 March they passed the island of Ipsara: "though it is almost a bare rock it has an industrious and hardworking population, and several ships with which they trade as far as Italy." The southern gale continued to blow and eventually "our scared Frenchies decided to put in at Porto Sigri" on the western coast of Lesbos. Before managing to put out to open sea the ship spent a few days waiting out the wind at Kos:

April 1. Headwind. Put into port Chevalier opposite Rhodes. The harbour is good but the entrance narrow. To the left remains of a fort that seem older than the Maltese knights who have given the harbour its name. Went ashore. At the bottom of the harbour are significant remains of a city that was situated partly on the plain, partly on the slopes of the mountain. Several sepulchral monuments. No inscriptions. No village is closer than 2 hours.²⁶

²³ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB. This letter is not dated but in the extracts published by Gjörwell 8 April 1789 in *Almänna Tidningar*, no. 41, the date is given as 1 March.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Vat. lat., fol. 40r.

²⁶ Ibid.

On 10 April the ship finally arrived at its destination: "Threw anchor at Alexandria. Went immediately ashore and visited my friend Baldwin the English General Consul who offered me his house." George Baldwin (1744–1826), whom Åkerblad had befriended on his earlier visit to Alexandria, was one of the most intriguing Britons in the Near East during the second half of the century.²⁷ He established himself as a trader in the Eastern Mediterranean in the 1760s and had become a successful merchant in Egypt in the mid 1770s. He insistently propounded the political and commercial importance of Egypt for British interests. Baldwin made repeated petitions to the government in London to take actions to secure a permanent British trade route through the Suez and the Red Sea. This route was nominally an Ottoman monopoly and closed to foreigners in order to protect the holy cities of Arabia. Nevertheless, European traders who paid customs and bribes to local governors used it. This was another source of tension between the central government in Constantinople and the Beys in Egypt.

Baldwin published a series of petitions and pamphlets. In a longer account of his activities in Egypt entitled *Political Recollections relative to Egypt* he summarized the aspirations of British traders in Egypt by describing a bizarre event. At the top of the great pyramid of Giza glasses were raised and a toast was drunk: "We composed our bowl of the Ganges, the Thames, and the Nile, and from the top of the Pyramid drank prosperity to England!" Whether this triple river toast was ever drunk is doubtful. It must have been a rather muddy mix and many travellers complained that it was not easy to climb the pyramid. That said, it must have been a moment to savour, especially imagining the view in the twilight looking out over Cairo, the Nile valley and the western desert.²⁸

Already in 1773 the governor of Cairo had promised Baldwin that "if you bring the India ships to Suez, I will lay an aqueduct from the Nile to Suez, and you shall drink of the Nile water."²⁹ The idea of a waterway from Suez to Cairo instead of directly to the Mediterranean made sense to a Cairene. The centrality of the city would be preserved and as the crow flies the distance between Cairo and Suez is shorter than that between

²⁷ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 28 December 1787, Constantinople, no. 105, Ep G 7:17, KB; Rosemarie Said Zahlan, "George Baldwin: Soldier of Fortune," in *Travellers in Egypt*, ed. P. Starkey and J. Starkey (London: Tauris, 2001); Maya Jasanoff, *Edge of empire: Lives, culture, and conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 127–32.

²⁸ James Baldwin, *Political Recollections Relative to Egypt*..., 2nd ed. (London 1802), 6.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 3–4.

Suez and the Mediterranean. There had previously been canals but they had fallen into disuse.

In 1786 Baldwin was appointed consul-general in Egypt with instructions to support British trade in competition against the French. In 1793, a few years after Åkerblad's visits, he received news that war had broken out between Britain and France. He forwarded the news to India where British forces could expel the French in Pondicherry having had the advantage of hearing about it first. He tried to make the most of this fortuitous coup when attempting to get support for his plans for British presence in Egypt. There was, however, little response in Britain until the French invaded Egypt in 1798.

Baldwin was no doubt among the best informed of the foreigners living in Egypt. He serves as an early witness to British aspirations in both the Middle East and in securing traffic to South Asia. He and Åkerblad had many opportunities to exchange opinions and information. Baldwin's maverick status seems to have been firmly established early on. He was supposedly quite difficult to deal with but saw with exceptional prescience how important this corner of the Mediterranean would soon become for both France and Britain in their quest for colonies and trade.

CHAPTER SIX

MIXING EAST AND WEST

This time Åkerblad's sojourn in Alexandria was shorter than on his first visit. Once again the plague was a deciding factor:

I had barely arrived in Alexandria when the plague erupted with such vehemence that the Europeans started to barricade themselves indoors. To avoid losing time I decided to leave Egypt for a few months, because rarely does the plague last longer than that when it erupts in the spring. I chose to go to Cyprus, which in ancient times had been so remarkable and which I had not had the possibility to visit during my stay in Syria. I left Alexandria the 19th of May and arrived the 23rd at Larnaca, the place where all European merchants and consuls reside.¹

Åkerblad spent a couple of weeks touring Cyprus from his base in Larnaca:

I made several excursions from there, to Famagusta in the neighbourhood of ancient Salamis, to Limasol, to Paphos where instead of the temple and altar of Freyja that we expect to see, we do not find anything but some churches in decay, finally to Nicosia, the present capital of the island, better built and populated than the others but slight in reputation compared to when it belonged to the Venetians.²

He used the name of the Nordic deity of love and fertility Fröja (Freyja) instead of Aphrodite, who according to one myth came from Cyprus. He observed that Nicosia was less populated under Ottoman rule than it had been under previous Venetian dominance. To what extent this statement is a reflection of the stereotype of Ottoman misrule is hard to assess. Cyprus' position in foreign trade in the Eastern Mediterranean had declined.

Cyprus had earlier been visited and described in 1733 by the Swedish diplomat Eduard Carleson. He mostly highlighted the natural and commercial resources of the island, but also repeated a few prejudices about the island's population. His description, rather than being the result of his own observations, appears to be an echo of received opinions on the

¹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

² Ibid. Åkerblad's tour of Cyprus is described by Paul Åström: "Two Swedish visitors to Cyprus. Truls Kåhre and Johan David Åkerblad," *Kypriakai spoudai*, 1961, 73–80.

islanders: "But they [Cyriots] are sly and given to deceit. The abundance of everything which surrounds them makes them more voluptuous and loose living than in any other place in the whole Levant." Carleson's description also well summarized the mercantilist stance of Swedish aspirations in the Mediterranean: "For Sweden it would not be worthwhile to start trading with this Island... principally because we would not find a market for our merchandise, but we would be compelled to bring ready money."³

Other nations had come to see Mediterranean trade in a different light, both as a thoroughfare to more easterly waters and as a profitable goal in itself. Åkerblad's references to trade serve to describe the activities and industriousness of the local populations rather than commenting upon potentials for Swedish commerce in the area. He was nonetheless well aware of the aspirations of Swedish trade in Ottoman territories. After all it was the Convoy Office, set up to support Swedish shipping in the Mediterranean, which had disbursed some of his travelling money. The Swedish government instituted a Levantine trading company modelled on the more successful venture trading with the Far East, however, it failed to make any profits and was dissolved in 1756. Although there was little direct trade between Sweden and the Mediterranean Swedish shipping made decent profits by transporting other nations' merchandise, especially during periods of war when Sweden remained neutral.⁴

Åkerblad was the first Swede to show antiquarian interest in Cyprus. The visitors who preceded him had not investigated any aspects of the island's past. As usual he copied local inscriptions and two of these he defined as 'Phoenician'.⁵ This is the first dated instance of Åkerblad's attention to Phoenician script and language. Callmer only briefly mentioned his profound interest in Phoenician matters and in Sweden his pioneering role is not noted. That Cyprus had been an important Phoenician centre was known since antiquity and inscriptions from Kition, the ancient name of the town that predated Larnaca, had been published. The most important such publication contained 33 inscriptions. Richard Pococke copied the

³ Eduard Carleson, "Kort Beskrifning om Öen Cypern, upsatt därstädes om Sommaren år 1733, af Hof-Cancelleren och Commandeuren af Kongl. Nordts. Orden, Herr Eduard Carleson, under des Österländska Resa," *Den Swenska Mercurius* 6 (1761): 695, 701. Transl. and commented by Paul Åström: "A Swedish description of Cyprus written in 1733," *Kypriakai spoudai*, 1960, 33–47.

⁴ Eskil Olán, *Sjörövarna på Medelhavet och Levantiska kompaniet: Historien om Sveriges gamla handel med Orienten* (Stockholm: Fritzes, 1921); Müller, *Consuls, Corsairs*.

⁵ Vat. lat., fol. 29r; Thomasson, *Between Rome and Orient*, 508.

to Hebrew to which Phoenician belonged. Semitic was subsequently used by the orientalist Johann Gottfried Eichhorn and had already become a standard concept by the first years of the nineteenth century.⁶

Of significance in this context is that it was only during the last decades of the eighteenth century that Semitic languages became a unified area of study. Instead of being only related to biblical or religious studies, the study of Semitic languages became a worthy subject in itself. Unifying the group of Near Eastern languages with common ancestry as a set of Semitic languages was not an isolated phenomenon. The late-eighteenth century is claimed as an important foundation phase for many disciplines. Such argumentation may sometimes be oversimplified but there is no doubt that the study of extra-European languages went through great changes during these few decades.

Åkerblad might have copied the two inscriptions because they were not included in Pococke's book. He noted in effect that he had seen numerous inscriptions, but only copied those two. There are several copies and translations of Pococke's Kition inscriptions in Åkerblad's notebook, as well as examples of other short Phoenician texts.⁷

Phoenicia and the Orient

When trying to understand the course of Åkerblad's curiosity the distinction between a wholly Greek foundation myth for European civilisation and an amalgam of Eastern and Mediterranean cultures as the substrate of classical civilisation makes little sense. During the late-eighteenth century the construct of a Greek-rooted European culture was not yet as advanced as it would become later during the nineteenth century. The details of how Phoenician culture and language(s) developed are still being discussed but the connection between the Greek and the Phoenician alphabets had been known about since early antiquity. However, it is still only partly understood when and how the Greek-speaking populations borrowed and adapted the Phoenician alphabet for their own use.

⁶ M. F. J. Baasten, "A Note on the History of 'Semitic,'" in *Hamlet on a Hill: Semitic and Greek Studies Presented to Professor T. Muraoka on the Occasion of his Sixty-fifth Birthday*, ed. M. F. J. Baasten and W. Th. van Peursen (Leuven: Peeters 2003).

⁷ Vat. lat., fol. 2v. Pococke's inscriptions nos. 18, 20, 26, and other inscriptions from Egypt.

Herodotus' story about how the mythological Phoenician prince Cadmus introduced the alphabet to the Greeks is exactly that: a story.

Åkerblad is an example of how the growing knowledge of Eastern Mediterranean ancient history straddled two areas: that is, Greek culture joined with the knowledge and passion for Semitic languages and cultures that predated what was later defined as the basis for Western civilisation. When Åkerblad later wrote about what superficially looked like Greek matters his view of the importance of Eastern influences on Greek culture was explicit (p. 341ff). As well as being a fervent hunter of Greek inscriptions, Åkerblad simultaneously looked for samples of Phoenician writing. What today are distinguished as separate fields—Greek versus Semitic/oriental studies—were in Åkerblad's time much more difficult to separate. His view of the ancient cultures of the Eastern Mediterranean forms a geographical unity and chronologically he viewed the transfer of ideas and culture as a continuum.

To reconstruct Åkerblad's vision of an 'Eastern Mediterranean culture,' if such an anachronistic concept may be of any use, is difficult. What we can divine is that his perception of both temporal and geographical relationships was different from what was later understood as the historical past of the area. Åkerblad's view was more open and less static than the more idealistic view of the all-importance of Greece that progressively took hold during the nineteenth century.

When Åkerblad worked with Coptic, oriental and Greek manuscripts at the National Library in Paris during 1801–2, one of his fellow researchers was the German writer and philosopher Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829). Schlegel, who was already a proficient Greek and Roman scholar, was then studying Indian manuscripts, work that resulted in his influential *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* [On the Language and Wisdom of India] in 1808. Schlegel quickly reacted to the effects of dividing oriental and Greek studies and called this separation “increasingly concocted and arbitrarily applied, as if this grand difference had foundations in reality.”⁸ Schlegel also defended a type of erudition based on extensive knowledge of languages, philosophy, history, and literature. In many senses Åkerblad embodies such an ideal, an ideal that would soon be overcome by the increasing specialisation of academic disciplines. The division between Greek and oriental studies was, according to Schlegel, in full motion at

⁸ Quoted from the translation in Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 64. On Schlegel's influence on German oriental studies see 58ff.

this point and soon oriental learning would branch out into a variety of often more or less self-contained disciplines, such as the study of Semitic languages and Indology, while the championing of Greece as the fundament of Western European culture would grow stronger.

It makes little sense to distinguish between the fields of Semitic and Greek epigraphic studies with regard to Åkerblad. Greek was known to an exhaustive extent, while there was no consensus on the history and varieties of the Phoenician language. Today we know that 'Phoenician' in itself is a crude label. When we use the term Phoenician without qualifying it we are guilty of simplifying and compressing some non-Greek cultures in the Eastern Mediterranean under one name. There was (and to a certain extent still is) a tendency to label fairly disparate cultural remains found in both the Syrian-Lebanese heartland and at the sites of the many colonies and trading posts around the Mediterranean Phoenician.⁹ What was then labelled as Phoenician is now understood to have comprised a number of settlements, spread over a large area, with a complicated history of development and transformation. Phoenician writing spans almost two thousand years, from about 1100 BCE to around the time of the Arab conquest of North Africa in the seventh and eighth centuries. Such a long period means that there are great variations in both script and language. There is no absolute agreement on how long Phoenician was spoken and written. The later variant, Punic, was spoken until the Arab conquest; maybe even later. Late inscriptions are written in an adapted Latin alphabet.

Phoenician script had been deciphered only a few decades earlier by Jean-Jacques Barthélemy (1716–1795), commonly known as abbé Barthélemy, whom Åkerblad probably met in Paris in 1789. Barthélemy first deciphered Palmyrene script in 1754. A dialect of Aramaic used in Palmyra, its script had developed from the Phoenician alphabet. In 1758 Barthélemy deciphered Phoenician script, supposedly overnight. Barthélemy's decipherments were the first of any ancient scripts. Barthélemy was also unusually clear when describing his own methods of decipherment; he postulated four distinct rules that are still valid guides.¹⁰

⁹ See Tamar Hodos' reinterpretation of 'Phoenician' and 'Greek' colonization: *Local Responses to Colonization in the Iron Age Mediterranean* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰ Jean-Jacques Barthélemy, "Réflexions sur quelques monuments Phéniciens, et sur les Alphabets qui en resultent," *Mémoires de littérature tirés des registres de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 30 (1764): 405–26; Peter T. Daniels, "'Shewing of Hard Sentences and Dissolving of Doubts': The First Decipherment," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 3 (1988): 419–36.

Western travellers had returned with copies of inscriptions from travels in the Mediterranean and among these were inscriptions that presented passages of the same text written in two languages. Barthélemy thus had access to one of the key elements in many decipherments, i.e., texts in the unknown script and the same text in a known language, ancient Greek in this instance.

In addition to this, an element that would prove to be of utmost importance in later decipherments was also present in these texts: proper names. Both personal names and toponyms can be used as keys to give phonetic values to unknown letters in an undeciphered script. In many cases names do not change their sounds dramatically between languages and they are therefore important elements in many decipherments.

In Cyprus Åkerblad was as yet not completely familiar with the different varieties of Phoenician scripts; otherwise his interpretation of the two inscriptions would probably have been more elaborate. Åkerblad's copies of Phoenician are also a testimony to his early interest in the graphic puzzles that little known scripts presented.

The knowledge of Phoenician language and culture that was available to Åkerblad and his colleagues was fundamentally derived from classical sources. There are famous passages on Phoenicians in both the *Odyssey* and in Herodotus. It is difficult both to reconstruct and to imagine what kind of understanding it was possible to assemble about Phoenician culture and expansion in the 1780s. Before systematic archaeology had unearthed a great number of both inscriptions and material remains, the only sources of these scripts were coins and a small number of inscriptions that had been published in travelogues and scattered accounts in the transactions of academies and learned societies. The scarcity of Phoenician texts meant that the few sources available were thoroughly analysed, and several scholars often wrote about the same short inscriptions. These dissertations may appear punctilious and exaggeratedly detailed to a modern reader. What has later been dismissed and called 'antiquarian' is sometimes the result of this overzealous examination of every tiny detail. When reading these early Phoenician dissertations it might be an act of clemency to bear in mind the lack of material the authors had to deal with, both of primary texts to analyse and of secondary literature commenting on and elucidating the Phoenician language and the cultural and historical context. In a later publication, specifically on a Phoenician inscription, Åkerblad was explicit on the dangers of exaggerating the importance of antiquarian work:

It is however this mania to minutely discuss every item that has slightly discredited the craft of the antiquary in the eyes of people of the world, who find laughable the high importance we often attach to objects of very little interest. Every new discovery, however small it might be, has, without doubt, its value... but let us refrain from long commentaries that do nothing but hinder real learning.¹¹

In the 1780s no repertoire of Phoenician inscriptions existed. Even today the corpus of Phoenician texts is quite restricted, probably numbering less than ten thousand. The great majority consist of short inscriptions.¹²

One of Åkerblad's early publications was an interpretation of a Phoenician inscription found in Cyprus, shown as inscription number 2 on the image from Pococke (Figure 19). Before publishing this treatise he gave a brief explanation of a bilingual—Phoenician and Greek—funerary monument found in Athens in the late-eighteenth century (Figure 40).¹³

Phoenician studies went into a sort of hiatus after the relatively active decades following Barthélemy's decipherment. The explanation in the standard handbook by Mark Lidzbarski is that there was a lack of new published texts.¹⁴ The dispersed European scholars with Phoenician interests had difficulties accessing all the relevant treatises and articles. Even though the sound values of most of the different varieties of Semitic scripts were sketchily known it was still not clear how the different languages were related; nor was the historical sequence that could explain the relationships and evolution of the languages fully understood. It was only with the repertoire and thorough linguistic analysis published by Wilhelm Gesenius in 1837 that most of the information and inscriptions were finally collected. Even Gesenius only published a total of 77 inscriptions and of these only 9 were new. The collecting of material gathered speed and 331 texts were published by 1869. Today the number of texts has increased by more than one hundred since Gesenius' time but it is still a small corpus if compared with the large quantity of, for instance, Greek inscriptions. There is no comprehensive monograph on the history

¹¹ Åkerblad, *Lettre sur une inscription phénicienne trouvée à Athènes* (Rome, 1817), 19.

¹² Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, "Les inscriptions," in *La civilisation phénicienne et punique : Manuel de recherche*, ed. Veronique Krings (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 19–30; Giovanni Garbini, *Introduzione all'epigrafia semitica* (Brescia: Paideia, 2006).

¹³ Åkerblad, "Marmor graecis et phoeniciis litteris inscriptum, e fosso Athenis, communicatum cum Societate sc. reg. gotting. a Io. Dav. Åkerblad," *Commentationes Societatis scientiarum gottingensis* 14 (1798–99): 225–28, printed in 1800. Inscription is *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, no. 116.

¹⁴ Mark Lidzbarski, *Handbuch der Nordsemitischen Epigraphik*, 2 vols. (Weimar, 1898), 1:95ff.

of Phoenician studies or Semitic epigraphy as a whole. Åkerblad's contribution to the field was minor and his publications were few. However, his knowledge of the language and insights into the cultural background were exceptional and Gesenius lauded his authoritative readings of difficult texts.¹⁵

But it was not only Åkerblad who would have had difficulties in understanding the Hellenocentric perspective of later scholars. An 1827 review of four treatises (including one of Gesenius' publications) on Phoenician and Punic inscriptions and archaeology was clear on the important role played by both Phoenicians and Egyptians in the spreading of civilisation to Greece: "The monuments of the two peoples that brought civilisation to Greece have had two very different destinies." Unlike the Egyptians, the Phoenicians had not left great monuments for posterity: "there is nothing left of the splendour but a few hard to explain inscriptions."¹⁶ The debate on the extent to which Greece had been influenced by the South and the East would continue. Throughout the nineteenth century the main view of Phoenician influence became more sceptical. The disparagement of the Phoenicians is in itself an expression of the focus on Greek heritage. A typical slating reads:

There is nothing to expect from the literature of the Phoenician people, if at all the merchants of Tyre, Sidon and from Carthage ever had a literature. One must rely upon chance to multiply the discoveries of inscriptions, the only remnants of so much activity, richness and glory... the people that according to tradition invented writing are one of those who wrote the least.¹⁷

Phoenician archaeology nevertheless continued and big excavations were undertaken in the heartlands on the Syrian-Lebanese coast in the 1860s. The leader, French orientalist Ernest Renan, wrote about the fortunate presence of French soldiers which made his digs easier, and how France's "noble preoccupation with matters of the human mind always has been associated with its military expeditions in faraway countries."¹⁸ Many passages in Renan's epochal study of the excavations are telling for the way

¹⁵ Wilhelm Gesenius, *Scripturae linguaeque phoeniciae monumenta*. . . 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1837) praise of Åkerblad 1:5, readings of his treatises 1:113–20; Paul Schröder, *Die Phönizische Sprache* . . . (Halle, 1869); Lidzbarski, *Handbuch*, 2:100.

¹⁶ Review article: "Inscriptions puniques et phœniciennes," *Bibliothèque universelle des sciences, belles-lettres, et arts* 34 (1827): 329–63. Åkerblad's treatises are eulogised as "réunissent l'élégance à l'érudition," 333.

¹⁷ Jules Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, "Notice sur M. Étienne Quatremère," *Journal des Savants*, 1857, 714.

¹⁸ Ernest Renan, *Mission de Phénicie*, 2 vols. (Paris 1864–74), 1:2.

in which he transposed prejudices about the ancient Phoenicians to the modern populations on the coast of Lebanon. The creation of a common Semitic heritage became a sorry mix of anti-Semitic and racist thought.

When Åkerblad later summed up his feelings on having seen Jerusalem he named the places that had inspired awe in him during his recent travels: Troy, Athens, Ephesus, Sardes, Samos, Rhodes, Memphis, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome. He listed places that 'Greeks and Romans' had made renowned, but also places that were neither Greek nor Roman but belonged to different cultural spheres. His did not support a Hellenocentric view of the history of the Eastern Mediterranean.

Åkerblad returned to Larnaca after his tour of Cyprus. News of the plague from Alexandria was not encouraging. Instead of returning to plague-ridden Egypt he chose to go to Jaffa on the coast of Palestine: "As the plague still ravaged Alexandria I decided to travel to the Judea, which the same illness prevented me from seeing last year, as Sir may remember I only saw the Galilee and a part of Samaria. I left Cyprus in the beginning of June to sail for Jaffa, ancient Joppe."¹⁹

¹⁹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"THE SABRE IN ONE HAND AND THE KORAN IN THE OTHER"

On 10 June Åkerblad boarded a French ship bound for Jaffa. The crossing was slow and it was five days later that the white lime cliffs were sighted. On 15 June he wrote: "[I] went ashore in the afternoon and immediately took quarters with Mr Damien V. Consul for, I believe, all European Nations and Knight of Christ's Sepulchre. In the evening I wandered in the gardens that surround Jaffa where people watered the crops in the same ways as in Egypt and Syria." Everyday observations and linguistic comments abound: "The wheel that turns up the water is here called not *Naura* but *Byara*. The watermelons here are excellent."¹

Before leaving Jaffa, Åkerblad entrusted the Franciscans with his money. The fear of banditry was all-prevailing and pilgrims made good targets. He described the atmosphere in a long diary entry:

[June] 16. Deposited my money with the prefect of the Franciscan monastery against his receipt. Mounted in the afternoon. Accompanied by the Consul and several others we rode to Ramle. We saw several tobacco plantations at the roadside. The country is well cultivated. Lydd, ancient Diospolis, is mostly in ruins. Remains of a mediaeval church are visible. In Ramle I was received in the monastery. I had supper in the refectory, rested until midnight, when I again mounted accompanied by a little boy on foot and two mounted Arabs, armed with lances. These Arabs, always fighting among themselves, choose to travel at night to avoid meeting their enemies. The terrain was flat for a couple of hours. Then the ground got rough, but the darkness prevented me from getting a clear notion of the district. At the first break of dawn we arrived at the foothills. I had agreed with my Arabs that they should accompany me to Jerusalem but they explained that now the danger was over and went their way. I continued the voyage with my companion on foot through the most worrying mountainous district I ever saw. In a few places remains of buildings could be seen, but not old ones. The road is utterly uncomfortable. We found a spring that gave us some refreshment.²

He continues by describing his entry into the Holy City; the relief of arriving after the worrying and tiring last leg of his journey is understandable:

¹ Vat. lat., fol. 41v.

² Vat. lat., fols. 41v–42r.

The heat was becoming unbearable. In a village we passed the people demanded *Caffar*, but I said I was Turk. We saw Jerusalem and lost sight of it two or three times before we arrived. All Christians are made to dismount from their horses when they arrive at the gates of Jerusalem. But as no one considered me Christian I rode all the way to the monastery of the Saviour, to which I was directed. It was midday when I arrived and the heat had all but suffocated me. A large glass of lemonade that was offered me was such an indescribable delight that I cannot remember anything like it.

Åkerblad's Arabic and Turkish were good enough for him to be able to pass himself off as a 'Turk.' Caffar was the local duty that non-Ottoman subjects had to pay before approaching the city. Upon arrival pilgrims were supposed to both pay the Caffar and obey the rules governing the presence of Christian orders and pilgrims in Jerusalem. Explanations vary as to why Christians were obliged to dismount from their horses before entering the city. The most common is that a Christian was not allowed to be higher than a Muslim, both in the literal and the figurative sense. Michael Eneman, one of Åkerblad's Swedish travelling predecessors, gave an additional motive for why Christians were only allowed to enter through the Damascus gate. He underlined the business aspects of charging Christians entrance fees to the holy places: "The reason for having all Europeans enter this gate is that the Turks in this way so much better can observe how many of these come marching, so that they may not fall short of paying the double duties they all have to pay at the entrance of Christ's grave's church."³ Although double charging did happen it was in the interest of the governors of Jerusalem to keep the pilgrims coming and such practices were sometimes punished. The administration had many reasons to guarantee the safety of pilgrims: financial, political, and religious.⁴ It has even been suggested that the Ottoman authorities exaggerated the dangers of the trip from the coast so as to be able to uphold the practice of charging pilgrims for armed escort.

If Åkerblad usually refrained from generalizing about the populations of the places he visited he was less sanguine about religion. There are several passages in Åkerblad's correspondence where it is made absolutely clear that he is neither a devout Christian, nor a supporter of Judaism. His impressions of Jerusalem make interesting reading in this respect:

³ Michael Eneman, *Resa i orienten 1711–1712*, ed. K. U. Nylander, 2 vols. (Uppsala, 1889), 2:113.

⁴ Peri Oded, *Christianity under Islam in Jerusalem: The Question of the Holy Sites in Early Ottoman Times* (Leiden: Brill 2001); Suraiya Faruqi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World around it* (London: Tauris, 2004), 171.

I have thus also seen the little town, initially unknown in a corner of the world that has finally become more renowned than Athens or Rome. It does nevertheless not awaken the feelings that capture us when we see places that Greeks and Romans have made famous. I have seen Troy (i.e. the place where it was), Athens, Ephesus, Sardes, Samos, Rhodes, Memphis, Alexandria, Carthage and Rome. With what rapture have I not contemplated the monuments that still beautify some of them, and when I in vain searched for traces of some of these places, I always reminded myself with delight of the events that these places have seen and the great men that have immortalized their memory. How is it, that we do not have any of these feelings, when we see Jerusalem?⁵

Åkerblad was again reminded of antiquity, and he expressed something akin to religious worship for the great pagan men of ancient history rather than religious Christian feelings. His rapture was reserved for historical contemplation. However, the language and expressions he uses are similar to those used by visitors filled with religious sentiment.

Everything about Jerusalem struck him as small, a little town in an unknown corner, the lack of great men (Jesus apparently did not belong to this category). Nevertheless, it would be unwarranted to make Åkerblad an example of Enlightenment secularisation at this point; his reaction towards church and religion rather signalled youthful defiance. The letter was addressed to Gjörwell whom he knew to be a firm believer in the same mould as his family. Gjörwell nevertheless published the Jerusalem passage in the letter almost verbatim while some of the political comments in the same letter went unpublished or were censored.⁶ Åkerblad might not have expressed himself so cautiously if he had had a less pious interlocutor; his letters to personal friends were more candid.

Erik Bergstedt was not even sure if it was worthwhile to go to Jerusalem during his trip to the East in the 1790s: "Maybe I will afterwards go to Jerusalem, but I am too little devout to assign any special value to its monuments, which likely are false and created by the monks."⁷

Whilst Åkerblad may strike us as entirely secular, he cannot have escaped the all-pervasive heritage of Christianity. His upbringing in a pietistic family might have inoculated him against many common modes of religious expression.

⁵ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

⁶ "UTDRAG af et *Bref* till Utgivaren af desse Alm. Tidningar, ifrån Hr Secreteraren *Joh. Dav. ÅKERBLAD*, om dess *Resa i Orienten*, dat. *Marseille*, d. 1 Mart. 1789," *Almänna Tidningar*, no. 41, 8 April 1789: 322. On the 'censored' passages p. 121.

⁷ Bergstedt to Rosenstein, 25 November 1794, Bujukdere, F 651 a, UUL.

It was customary in the Moravian congregation to write a so-called *Lebenslauf* [Life history] of the members of the community after their death. Åkerblad's father wrote such a biography of Åkerblad's mother. This manuscript of around 100 pages gives some indications of the religious atmosphere of Åkerblad's childhood and first youth.⁸ His father wrote of how he himself was hit by disease: "Year 1769 I entered a labyrinth . . . because for several years I was weak with nerve sicknesses." The *Lebenslauf*'s focus on suffering and malady is part of the genre, but being a mirror-maker was certainly not the most salutary of professions; mirrors were fabricated using mercury and tin. We know today that exposure to highly poisonous mercury has severe psychological and physiological effects. The description of Åkerblad's mother's drawn out illness and death gives insights into an emotional form of Christian pietism:

I often stood outside the door without her knowing it and heard something she said, such as: Oh my sweet Jesus. These remains are yours, yes the lamb of God! Can no longer live, await a merciful sign from you to fall asleep in your wounds, to join you, behold and worship You.

Åkerblad's mother died in 1776 at the age of 44, when Johan David was 13 years old. We can only speculate whether Åkerblad rebelled against or renounced his parents' pietistic religiosity. What can safely be said is that he did not choose to express himself in the devout language used by his parents.

That Åkerblad was critical of high-strung religiosity is evident from a letter sent to a friend in Stockholm a few years after his visit to Jerusalem. He dismissed recent Swedish literature that had not caught up with new ideas: "Everything is Theological and Romantic twaddle and nonsense of which we already had enough."⁹ He did not profess any faith at the time of his death in 1819. The Italian Romantic poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), whom Åkerblad had supported, wrote to his uncle lamenting Åkerblad's death.¹⁰ Leopardi's uncle was less than sympathetic towards Åkerblad when he answered Leopardi:

⁸ Johan Åkerblad, 1776, *Levnadslopp över hustru Anna Magdalena Lenngren*, non-paginated ms of 103 pages. Evangeliska brödräfsamlingens [the Moravian Church] arkiv, Stockholm. The books listed in the estate inventory of Johan Åkerblad are all religious. 15 October 1799, p. 641, E II A 1:2: 326, Justitiekollegiet, Stockholm stads rådhusrätt, Stockholm City Archives.

⁹ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

¹⁰ Leopardi's letter to Antici is not known but he expressed the same feeling in a letter to Pietro Giordani, 12 February 1819, Recanati, in Giacomo Leopardi, *Epistolario*, ed. Franco

You are right in pitying the death of the learned Akerblad, not for the letters, which he did not benefit at all, but for the terrible irreparable disaster of himself. . . . That wretched man, in the midst of so much learning, did not see the light [faith] that sparkles in the eyes of even the most ignorant if they are not slaves of sensuality and pride. Cancellieri who knew him intimately gave me this frightening secret.¹¹

Åkerblad had no interest in the confessional aspects of religion. In a religious discussion he once answered a seminary student that: "I have not been made an infidel by Voltaire, but I have been made an infidel by you divines."¹² Like many of his contemporaries he was well versed in both pagan mythology and Christian history but showed no personal interest in faith. He had good knowledge of Muslim customs and traditions, which was an inevitable consequence of his interest in the Arabic language and its history. As a classical philologist and scholar of oriental languages he was well aware of the importance of religion and the biblical tradition, though he did express how tedious he at times found the reading of religious texts.

During his week in Jerusalem he noted language particularities, as was his custom: "The peasants around Jerusalem pronounce the letter ζ more or less like the Turks."¹³ The surroundings of the city were likewise lacking in places of interest: "In the valley of Josaphat there are some graves of a peculiar construction type, but forgive me, Sir, that I have listed what thousands of travel descriptions mention."¹⁴

After leaving Jerusalem he spent two weeks in Jaffa looking for a ship that would take him back to Alexandria from where he planned to continue the voyage towards the Barbary States. He explained why he could not find a ship: "Having returned to Jaffa I was forced to wait there 14 days before I could find a small boat to Damietta. Russian cruisers have made these waters so dangerous that the Arabs do not dare to go out."¹⁵

The Russo-Turkish war that would last from 1787–92 was in full force. Åkerblad had already witnessed how the war against Russia had diverted

Brioschi and Patrizia Landi, 2 vols. (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), 1:260. See p. 319 for Åkerblad and Leopardi's contacts.

¹¹ Carlo Antici to Giacomo Leopardi, 24 March 1819, Rome, in Leopardi, *Epistolario*, 1:289.

¹² Joseph Wolff, *Travels and Adventures of the Rev. Joseph Wolff, D. D., L.L. D.*, 2 vols. (London, 1860–61), 1:96.

¹³ Vat. lat., fol. 43v.

¹⁴ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Ottoman forces sent to Cairo to deal with the two Mameluk Beys in Egypt. Now there were other signs that the war was not going well for the Ottomans. Shipping and trade were curtailed by the Russian naval presence.

In accordance with his habits Åkerblad used his time in Jaffa to advance his language pursuits: "During my stay in Jaffa I got acquainted with some Samaritans. I bought from one of them a fragment of the Samaritan bible that contains some chapters of the Deuteronomy."¹⁶ One of "the very few Samaritans that live in Jaffa" helped him to learn the alphabet as it was still used and Åkerblad copied it in his notebook.¹⁷

Åkerblad wrote down distances and travelling times from Jaffa to a range of places. He noted a story from the desert, to the south of Aqaba at Ma'ân: "at the distance of 5 to 6 days from there, according to a report of the Arabs, there are in the middle of the desert entire petrified villages, with men, women and animals, all petrified."¹⁸

On 6 July 1788 he eventually found a boat that took him as far as the eastern Nile Delta town of Dumyat [Damietta]. Against the wind it took five days, including a day "tacking in front of Tanis lake."¹⁹ The boat sailed close to the coast and he could take down the names of villages and tombs of "Saints Musulmans."

Travel in Disguise

Åkerblad could not find a ship in Dumyat and chose to continue overland (Figure 20). He set out on the journey towards Alexandria a few days later. He left at sunset, riding a horse accompanied by a guide on a camel. They slept on the beach. Whilst this may resemble our idea of romantic eastern travel, for Åkerblad it was decidedly less fantasy-like:

[July] 15. I left this city. I was on horseback accompanied by a single man riding a camel. We left towards sunset and after a few hours we passed a branch of the Nile. We then rested a few hours on the sand very close to the sea. We rode along the sea for all of the next day and only saw a single miserable village made up of a few straw huts in the afternoon.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Vat. lat., fol. 12r.

¹⁸ Vat. lat., fol. 43v.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.



Figure 20. A view of Dumyat. The drawing was made in the 1760s. The town was probably little different when Åkerblad visited it but shipping and trade was depressed because of the Russian war. Several years of low Nile water levels and bad harvests had also affected the economy. *Carsten Niebuhrs Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien und andern umliegenden Ländern*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen, 1774–78), 1: pl. 8. Photo author.

The area was scarcely populated. 22 years later Åkerblad would write about this part of the journey when he was investigating Egyptian geography. Two important things were altered in that account. Åkerblad changed his mode of transport from a horse to a camel as this was a more appropriate ‘Egyptian’ mode of transport after images of Egypt and its inhabitants had become more common in the wake of the French invasion in 1798. The single miserable village from 1788 completely disappeared from the second version written in 1810. The supposed emptiness of the territories was sometimes used to justify European conquest:

During the fifteen or sixteen hours that I needed to go from Damiat to Brullos [Borollos], I only saw the sea on one side and the desert on the other. . . . I did not even meet a living creature during the whole way, only a countless number of sea spiders which were running extremely fast on the sand, and when our camels approached hurried away into the sea.²¹

Åkerblad reached “Cap Brylos, the northernmost point of Egypt” situated midway on the Delta coast, and continued: “I immediately embarked on a boat loaded with water-melons. We sailed all day and the following night and arrived the next day, the 18th at Alexandria.”²² (Figure 21.)

²¹ Åkerblad, *Sur les noms coptes*, 369.

²² JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

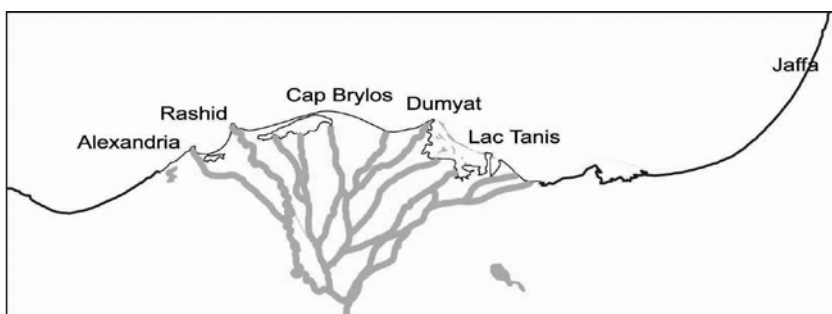


Figure 21. Åkerblad eventually managed to find a boat in Jaffa that took him to Dumyat. He rode from Dumyat to Borollos where he found a boat transporting water-melons to Alexandria.

Åkerblad told Gjörwell how the opportunity to pose as a Turkish soldier made it possible for him to visit places normally out of reach to European travellers (Figure 22): "I did this trip disguised as a Turkish soldier and I am in despair because neither my purse nor my time permitted me to see the entire Delta that is to us so unknown and that my disguise made it possible to do in safe conditions."²³

The advantages were obvious; he was adopting local dress which, together with his knowledge of local languages, made it possible to travel in relative safety. He was not exaggerating the dangers, especially in the Eastern Nile Delta. It remained unknown territory for Europeans for quite some time. During the French occupation surveying the Delta met with innumerable problems. The population had a long tradition of insurrection.²⁴

Donning Ottoman dress was also common practice for both travellers and foreign residents. Dressing like Ottoman overlords offered a measure of security as it identified the travellers as members of the ruling class. Åkerblad wore local dress for travelling, and we can assume he did so from an early stage in his travels. The rich iconography of westerners dressed up in local clothes does not indicate that they went native in any way.

Clothing was a powerful metaphor used by travellers. Sestini's quotation cited above denigrated the creativity of the Turks by using the hat the inhabitants of Constantinople often wore as a means to describe the

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dominique Vivant Denon, *Voyage dans la basse et la haute Égypte, pendant les campagnes du général Bonaparte*, 2 vols. (London, 1802), 1:50–54.



Figure 22. A richly dressed Janissary from Constantinople in the late 1700s. Åkerblad's outfit while travelling in disguise as a Janissary was likely less conspicuous. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 2:2, pl. 125. UUL.

emptiness of their heads. Nonetheless, Sestini himself changed headgear before setting out on a trip: "Now I am in full armour, to commence the Voyage... To do this voyage I have had to shed the hat and adopt the Turban and thus take on Oriental costume." Sestini tells us how he was obliged to dress up to attend a dinner hosted by the British ambassador: "Before our departure the British Ambassador Sir Robert Ainslie invited us to a lavish meal, on the condition that we dressed up as orientals." He then describes his clothing in detail, garment by garment, page after page, finishing: "This is what I had to do to transform myself, to partly amalgamate the customs of these peoples... It is the first time I have so masqueraded."²⁵ By using the word 'armour' he indicates that the measure is related to a need for protection. Erik Bergstedt wrote that in Cairo he had not wanted to go out before the tailor finished his Turkish dress because he had been insulted in the streets when dressed as a westerner.²⁶ Another reason to try to pass as a local was to lessen the costs—no taxes or customs were imposed and lower expenses were charged for protection.

Åkerblad retained some of his 'oriental' clothes when he returned to Europe. He met the orientalist Antoine-Isaac Sylvestre de Sacy (1758–1838) in Paris on his way back to Sweden in the spring of 1789. The outfit made an impression. In a letter written more than a decade after their encounter Sacy remarked on Åkerblad's clothes: "I remember... having had the pleasure of meeting M. Åkerblad in Paris, he was then wearing Greek costume, and was accompanied by Mr de Villoison."²⁷

Åkerblad was wearing unusual Eastern clothes while visiting the Paris luminaries with Villoison. He might have enjoyed the attention his dress attracted; it distinguished him as a great traveller and man of the world (Figure 23).

²⁵ Domenico Sestini, *Lettere odeporiche o sia Viaggio per la penisola di Cizico per Brussa e Nicea fatto dall'abate Domenico Sestini accademico fiorentino l'anno 1779*, 2 vols. (Livorno, 1785), 1:2–10.

²⁶ Bergstedt to Rosenstein, 20 April 1795, Cairo, F 651 a, UUL.

²⁷ Silvestre de Sacy to Friedrich Münter, 4 June 1800, Paris, NKS 1698, Det Kongelige Bibliotek (The Danish National Library), Copenhagen (hereafter KBK). On Sacy p. 217f. Münter's correspondence is partly published in *Münter*, but the letters are edited and passages often erased, this quote is transcribed from the ms.



Figure 23. Åkerblad's friend Edward Dowell travelled in Greece in the first years of the nineteenth century. He visited a bishop who resided close to Delphi, seated on the left. The man holding the water jug and the female servant are Albanians. The others wear 'Greek dress,' it was something like this that Sacy was thinking of when he called Åkerblad's clothes 'costume grec.' *Views in Greece, from drawings by Edward Dodwell Esq. F.S.A. &c.* (London, 1821), pl. 2, Dinner at Crisso. UUL.

Mediterranean and Baltic Crusades

Åkerblad stayed in Alexandria for over a month and left when he found a ship bound for Tunis. The trip from Alexandria to Tunis met with adverse weather conditions—fifty days was longer than expected:

In the end of August I embarked on a French ship bound for Tunis, in the company of the son-in-law of the Moroccan Emperor, Âbd el Malek who was returning from Mecca. He started by showing me courtesy and ended by making me pay 160 piastres for the passage. Our trip was 50 days.²⁸

Åkerblad complained about the price he was made to pay for the passage but the company of a Moroccan royal afforded protection from corsairs. Privateers from the Barbary States plied the Mediterranean. They usually took all crews and passengers they came across prisoner, trying to

²⁸ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

exchange the 'valuable' individuals for ransoms and selling the others as slaves. Sweden was in principle at peace with the North African regencies and Morocco at this time. Treaties were concluded with Algiers in 1729, Tunis in 1736, Tripoli in 1741, and with the kingdom of Morocco in 1763. While the treaties protected Swedish ships, seamen and individual travellers did not always benefit from this protection.

Åkerblad's stay in Tunis and its surrounding areas lasted almost three months. He arrived in the middle of October and left the city on 7 January 1789. He had ample time to explore the city and its surroundings: "From Tunis I made a few short trips into the country. Sir knows that Carthage and Utica are almost as destroyed as Memphis and Babylon. The coast has undergone changes that do not allow certainty in understanding where those so renowned places were situated."²⁹ He made an effort to discover where the famous places of Phoenician/Punic history had been located but came to no certain conclusions. An annotation in the notebook proves that he was preoccupied with the location of Carthage: "The lake of Tunis was the harbour of Carthage, this seems indubitable from a passage of Polybius B.1.Ch. 73."³⁰ He also pursued his language studies (Figure 24).

Åkerblad got news of developments in the far North. The information he received in Tunis was sufficient to enlighten him about the dire Swedish conditions in the war against Russia:

Please tell me my dear Assessor—the state of things in Sweden? How is it possible that some of our countrymen are so mean as not to want to follow the best of Kings? It was in Tunis that I had the grief to hear this instead of the news of victories that I expected.³¹

<u>Tunis</u>	<u>Haleb</u>	<u>Masr.</u>
Sehinika torchon	---	Seharmuta شرموت
Schafchic bömt	Tarbofeh	---
harom, butrami, Seftari, - - -		Shram ارام

Figure 24. Åkerblad continued his language studies in Tunis. He compared words in various Arabic dialects, in this list an example from Tunis, Aleppo, and Egypt: "Tunis Haleb Masr." Fols. 32v–33r, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Vat. lat., fol. 44r. Another proof of his geographic research is a list of Tunisian locations he got from a "German doctor to the Bey of Tunis," Vat. lat. fol. 26v.

³¹ JDA to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

The last years' machinations in both the North and Constantinople had led to foreseeable consequences, a war between Sweden and Russia. For several years before war broke out Sweden had kindled antagonism between Russia and Turkey through Heidenstam in Constantinople. It was widely predicted that a new Russo-Turkish war was soon to erupt and Gustav III saw only advantages from a Russian war with the Turks. Such a war would weaken Russian pressure in the North and a victory would further encourage Russia's southern expansion.

Heidenstam was instructed to sow discontent in Russo-Turkish relations in November 1784 and again in May 1785. Sweden's fear of Russia was realistic. The plight of Poland and its recent division, which within a couple of decades would erase it from the map, served as a deterrent. Russian pressure on Ottoman territories induced Turkey to start a war with Russia in August 1787. This was the war that the naval commander Ghazi Hasan Pascha, who was sent to Egypt to re-establish Ottoman rule, was called back to fight. When news of the Russo-Turkish war arrived in Stockholm the king immediately started to look into what could be done to encourage Turkish war efforts. The king tried to get support from Prussia, France and Britain but these efforts eventually came to nothing. Sweden erroneously counted on the hope that Britain would oppose Russian expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean because Russia threatened British interests in India.

The negotiations in Constantinople were still proceeding when Sweden declared to the Porte its intention to break with Russia on the basis of Sweden's alliance with Turkey since 1737. In return for supporting Turkey Sweden demanded subsidies during the war and for the ten years following the end of the war. Sweden also demanded that Turkey undertake no separate peace negotiations with Russia. Heidenstam eventually managed to negotiate a treaty but this was only signed in July 1789 when Sweden had already been at war with Russia for a year.

Preparations for a war against Russia were carried out in secrecy because the king wanted to make a surprise attack, but also because he wanted to avoid appearing as the aggressor. The process leading up the Swedish attack on Russia has been described as a series of bad decisions. The idea was to provoke Russia to attack but in fact the war was started in the summer of 1788 by a Swedish attack. Inconclusive naval battles were fought in the middle of July, and it was soon clear that the war could not be won. Discontent among high-ranking officers was widespread. A league of mutinous officers had convened in Anjala, a small town on the Russian border. 113 officers signed the Anjala Act on 12 August 1788. This

held that the declaration of war was illegal and demanded that peace negotiations with Russia be started. It was to this mutiny that Åkerblad referred when he wrote that certain countrymen did "not want to follow the best of Kings."

In Europe the war between Sweden and Russia was observed with great interest. Denmark saw the potential in a destabilised Sweden and seized the opportunity to declare war against Sweden, while Britain and Prussia had their own interests to defend in the Baltic and were unhappy with the possibility of too great a Russian influence in the area.

Such was the news from Sweden that reached Åkerblad in Tunis. He proposed to Gjörrwell that it was time to preach for an expedition against Sweden and Turkey's common enemy:

A word from king Gustaf and I will fly with the sabre in one hand and the Alcoran in the other to preach a crusade in—against the barbarians that provoked discord in the North and who threaten to crush my best friends—the Turks.³²

It is not clear how deeply Åkerblad understood the intricacies of the war policies worked out in Sweden and Russia. In a few months he was going to attend war headquarters in Finland and observe hostilities in person. What he had witnessed so far was the effects of the major powers' efforts to gain advantages for their commerce in the Mediterranean. He had also seen how they tried to secure territories with the common objective of breaking up "this weakened Empire," as the French ambassador Choiseul-Gouffier had termed it.

The sympathy Åkerblad expressed for his "best friends the Turks" need not necessarily be reduced to window-dressing vis-à-vis the receiver of the letter, the royalist Gjörrwell. Åkerblad had witnessed at close hand diplomatic intrigues in Constantinople and had seen how the great nations acted towards the Ottomans. His sympathy for the Turks was probably more than an expression of fear of Russia. His experiences in Egypt must also have made clear to him that many Ottoman provinces had aspirations to break loose from Constantinople. This was also noticeable in Tunis where the local Bey wanted to maintain relations that guaranteed his freedom of movement.

Åkerblad understood the perils of being a small and peripheral country such as Sweden in relation to greater neighbours. Russia had entered

³² Ibid.

an expansionist phase and would continue to grow substantially during the following decades, partly at the expense of Sweden and the Ottoman state. Sweden would end up losing Finland to Russia during the Napoleonic wars. The plight of the Ottoman Empire was at this point even more evident, torn apart as it was by internal troubles and constantly attacked by foreign powers.

It is amusing to imagine the warrior-scholar flying through the air with the Koran in one hand and the sable in the other, preaching a common crusade against the Russian barbarians. Using the Crusade as a reference was less loaded with significance than it is today. An anecdote about Choiseul-Gouffier is illuminating. He was an avid collector of antiquities and was trying to get permission to remove a Greek inscription, now dated to around 550 BCE.³³ The inscription was located in a small village in the Dardanelles and was under the naval commander Hasan Pasha's jurisdiction. According to the son of the Dutch representative in Constantinople, Choiseul-Gouffier lied when he asked for permission to remove the inscription and claimed that it was connected to an ancestor of his who had participated in the Crusades (Figure 25).

Sir Robert Ainslie, the British ambassador at the Porte who was himself a collector, maliciously informed the chief admiral that the Sigeian inscription was much older than the era of the Crusades. Ainslie also remarked that it would anyhow be difficult to find an ancestor of Choiseul-Gouffier who had taken part in them.³⁴

The climate of competition between European countries in Constantinople was such that any anecdote must be treated with circumspection; it is not unlike the story about the reprinting of Choiseul-Gouffier's introduction to his *Voyage Pittoresque*.

Åkerblad was on his way back to Europe after almost six years in Ottoman territories. He knew the three largest Ottoman cities, Constantinople, Cairo, and Aleppo, long before he visited the most important capitals of Europe. He spoke the main languages, Turkish, Arabic and Greek fluently. He knew the great capitals of antiquity, Athens, Rome, Memphis, and Carthage. He was knowledgeable about Islam and he had with scepticism visited Jerusalem, the centre for Christianity and Judaism. He had encoun-

³³ The local populations repeatedly resisted the removal. For an in-depth treatment of this subject see my: "Justifying and Criticizing the Removals of Antiquities in Ottoman lands: Tracking the Sigeion Inscription," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 17, no. 3 (2010): 493–517.

³⁴ Dedem, *Un général hollandais*, 21.



Figure 25. Choiseul-Gouffier's audience with Hassan Tchaousch-Oglou. The Ottoman official was responsible for the areas around the Troad. Choiseul-Gouffier asked for his support in the quest for antiquities from the area. Choiseul-Gouffier, *Voyage pittoresque*, 1: pl. 75. UUL.

tered the Coptic church in Egypt and the Christian churches in the area. His experiences cannot be summed up easily; he had gained exceptional knowledge of all aspects of life and culture in the Eastern Mediterranean and certainly knew it more than any other living Swede.

PART TWO

1789–1801: REVOLUTION AND TURMOIL

CHAPTER EIGHT

RETURN TO EUROPE

1789 was not only an important year in French and European politics but also in Åkerblad's life and career. He had now spent almost six years abroad and what could be called his education—in the wider sense—was finished. His knowledge of languages qualified him for any task that could be assigned to him by the Swedish or, for that matter, any European government with contacts with the Ottoman Empire. He had met a wide range of scholars and had friends and acquaintances in most centres of oriental learning. As Åkerblad slowly made his way back to Sweden his journey brought him to France where he saw for himself the level of discontent with the regime. His first stop was Marseille.

Åkerblad had left Tunis 7 January. He disembarked at the Pomègues islet in the bay of Marseille on 22 January.¹ Boats from the Levant were not allowed to sail into the main port but had to dock at this island. Since there was still a high risk of the plague hitting Europe Åkerblad had to be quarantined at the Lazaretto hospital. The Lazaretto was situated in the harbour on the waterfront so that it could receive 'guests' directly from the small boats that brought them over from Pomègues (Figure 26).

Åkerblad was forced to leave his collections of oriental antiquities behind when he was released from the Lazaretto.² It is unknown whether he had been obliged to sell them or whether they were confiscated as 'infected' merchandise. Åkerblad in any case lacked the money for his trip back to Stockholm and had to obtain funds in late February and again in March from the Swedish consul in Marseille.³

The first thing Åkerblad did when he left quarantine was to visit the city's scholars. Marseille was graced by the presence of Abbé Raynal:

Finally after a couple of months in Tunis I arrived here at Marseille and I was recently released from quarantine. I believed my first duty was to visit l'Abbé Raynal, this servant of humanity, truth... whose works I love and

¹ Vat. lat., front inside cover.

² JDÅ to Oluf Gerhard Tychsen, 26 June 1795, Stockholm, MS Orient 284, Rostock University Library.

³ 26 May, 21 July 1789, Kanslikollegium protokoll, SNA; François Philippe Fölsch, dispatch, 27 January 1789, Marseille, Gallica 511, Diplomata, SNA.

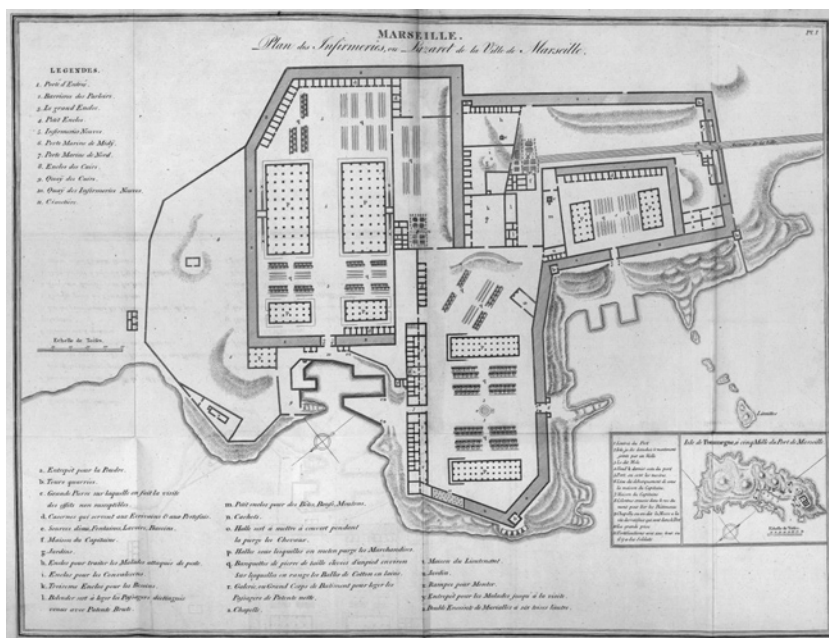


Figure 26. Plan of the Lazaretto of Marseille. The small inset map on the right is of the island of Pomègues where ships from the Levant docked. Crew, passengers and merchandise were then transferred to the Lazaretto on the mainland. John Howard, *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe with Various Papers Relative to the Plague*. . . (London, 1791). UUL.

admire. His company is as captivating as his publications and I benefit from his permission to often visit him.⁴

Guillaume Thomas Raynal's (1713–1796) most famous work is the *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des européens dans les deux Indes*, first published in 1770. Critical of slavery and, to a certain extent, of the colonial push by European nations, it was perceived as a veiled attack on the monarchy. It was printed in more than 30 editions until 1789 and some of the political judgments expressed in the work became increasingly radical as the text in the new editions was changed. The book was banned in Sweden, but Raynal was nevertheless widely read

⁴ JDÅ to Gjørwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 713, KB.

and discussed in Swedish political circles.⁵ Raynal's critique of government and monarchy led to his being exiled from Paris in 1781. Although he was allowed back to France in 1787 he remained banned from Paris, and so he settled in Marseille. Raynal hosted a busy salon where Åkerblad would have had the occasion to meet, for instance, the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda who later became instrumental in the Latin American fight for independence. Miranda visited Raynal in the second half of February 1789 with his Swedish valet, who certainly could have transmitted precious Swedish news to Åkerblad.⁶

Parts of Åkerblad's letter recounting his meeting with Raynal were published in Gjörrwell's magazine. Significantly the printed text ends after the name Raynal: "I arrived here at *Marseille* and I was recently released from quarantine. I have visited Abbé *Raynal*—" ⁷ sparing the reader Åkerblad's praise of Raynal as a friend of humanity and truth. Gjörrwell was aware of which way the wind was blowing and intentionally omitted Åkerblad's tribute to the controversial writer. Publishing news from France only became prohibited the following year, in 1790, when the scope of the political changes in France became clear. The passage in which Åkerblad preached his crusade with the Koran and the sabre against the Russians, was likewise not published.

Åkerblad also asked Gjörrwell for news of the literary scene in Stockholm: "Relate news to me from the Parnassus" and from the academies in Stockholm that had parallels in Marseille. "I am also acquainted with some of the Marseille academicians (because Massilia also has its science and letters academy, though it is not yet well known in the learned world)." The French provincial academies were important bodies of learning.⁸

Åkerblad's return to Sweden was drawing closer. In addition to asking for news, he wanted Gjörrwell to remind his acquaintances of his existence. Åkerblad's years abroad had given him a different perspective on the Swedish literary scene and he asked what Thorild was up to:

⁵ Harald Elovson, "Raynal och Sverige," *Samlaren*, 1928, 18–84. Fredrik Thomasson, "Raynal and Sweden: Royal Propaganda and Colonial Aspirations," in *Raynal's Histoire philosophique des deux Indes: Colonial Writing, Cultural Exchange and Social Networks in the Age of the Enlightenment*, ed. Jenny Mander, Mark Darlow and Cecil Courtney (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2013).

⁶ Gilles Bancarel, *Raynal ou le devoir de vérité* (Paris: Champion, 2004), 377f.

⁷ "UTDRAG af et *Bref* till Utgifvaren af desse Alm. Tidningar, ifrån Hr Secreteraren *Joh. Dav. ÅKERBLAD*, om dess *Resa i Orienten*, dat. *Marseille*, d. 1 Mart. 1789," *Almänna Tidningar*, no. 41, 8 April 1789, 323.

⁸ Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des lumières en province: Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680–1789*, 2 vols. (Paris: Éd. EHESS, 1978).

Please tell me what has happened to a certain Thorild who in my time showed so much talent along the lines of Klopstock and Milton? Has he finally been crushed by petty and ignoble French influences? I have never been able to understand why the Swedes, who like other nations have their own talent and their own tastes, are content with slavishly aping others.⁹

Åkerblad was very dismissive of what he viewed as overly precious French taste. The Swedish writer Thomas Thorild (1759–1808) was known for his radical ideas. In 1784 he got away with mentioning Raynal's *deux Indes* in a publication. In 1791 he tried to refer to him again but the censors erased Raynal's name. Åkerblad's models for good poetry were German and English, i.e., Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock and John Milton. Milton had not only been a poet, as Åkerblad well knew, but also an influential civil servant and combative polemicist who had fought for freedom of expression. Milton's defence of the Commonwealth and the English republic could certainly have been regarded as a model by Åkerblad. Milton's justification of regicide would become even more topical in the next few years. As we will see below, Åkerblad was an ardent republican and Milton's role as both poet and statesman probably made him even more sympathetic in Åkerblad's eyes. Nevertheless, it was not good enough simply to copy foreign poets, be they good or bad. The ideal would be to create a national tradition. Åkerblad seemed sceptical as usual. He had now been abroad for half a decade and in continuous contact with scholars from other nations. His perspective on Swedish culture and literature had changed.

Paris and London

For years Åkerblad had wanted to visit both Paris and London. His most important reason for wanting to go to these cities was to visit their manuscript collections, which according to Åkerblad were richer than in any single place in the Orient.¹⁰

By 17 March 1789 Åkerblad was in Paris, where he looked up his old friends from his travels in the East. Villoison wrote to their common acquaintance Michaelis in Göttingen: "Mr Åkerblad who had the honour to meet you in Göttingen is now in Paris after having returned from his trips in Egypt, Syria and Palestine. He asks me to send his regards."¹¹

⁹ JDÅ to Gjörwell, 1 March 1789, Marseille, no. 5, Ep G 7:13, KB.

¹⁰ JDÅ to Gustav III and Chancery President [Kanslipresident] Oxenstierna, 1 March 1788, Constantinople, Biographica Å, vol. 1, SNA.

¹¹ Villoison to Michaelis, 17 March 1789, in Joret, *D'Ansse de Villoison*, 330.

Through the good offices of Villoison Åkerblad met with the most important Greek scholars and orientalists in Paris. These probably included Barthélemy, whose pioneering work on the Phoenician decipherments made him especially interesting to Åkerblad. He met the orientalist and Arabist Antoine-Isaac Sylvestre de Sacy who remarked on Åkerblad's 'Greek costume' and who later became an influential colleague. Åkerblad was probably introduced to the prominent Greek scholar Adamantios Korais (1748–1833) during this first visit to Paris.

Åkerblad gained his first experiences of French oriental scholarship and the structure and functions of the French universities and academies. Constantly impoverished, he received money through the Swedish ambassador in Paris, Erik Magnus Staël von Holstein, the husband of Anne Louise Germaine Necker.¹² She had published her first books by the time of Åkerblad's visit and would soon be known as the writer Madame de Staël.

Political conditions dictated that Åkerblad had to return to Sweden via London as Denmark had declared war on Sweden. Åkerblad received money from businessman and Swedish General Consul in London Claes Grill to pay for the trip to Stockholm.¹³ Åkerblad surely already spoke English well; he had had ample opportunities to practise it both in Constantinople and during the years of travelling in the Ottoman Empire. It is likely that while he was in Britain Åkerblad visited the authorities in his fields. He may well have gone to Oxford and/or Cambridge. There was also a small community of Swedish scholars and writers in London. What is certain is that Åkerblad acquainted himself with the local oriental scholars and visited libraries and academies. Even though his stay in London must have been fairly brief, not longer than a month, it was there that he came to realise that his knowledge had a market value outside of Sweden. His language capabilities were appreciated and he received offers of employment, something he would use later when he tried to get better conditions for his services once back in Sweden.

Åkerblad's father wrote to him requesting information about his younger brother Timotheus (born in 1768) who was in London "in debt, and he has almost finished all of his little inheritance on the Cup [liquor], Bacchus and Venus."¹⁴ According to his father, Timotheus could be found

¹² Kanslikollegium protokoll, 21 July 1789, SNA

¹³ Kanslikollegium protokoll, 26 May, 21 July 1789, SNA.

¹⁴ Johan Åkerblad to JDÅ, 6 April 1789, Stockholm. Cited from a copy in Gjörwell's correspondence, no. 79, Ep G 4:3, KB.



Figure 27. The news that Åkerblad had travelled disguised as a Turkish soldier had reached his family in Stockholm, probably through Gjørwell. Åkerblad had implored Gjørwell not mention anything about his financial difficulties and the problems on his journeys to his father. The diplomat Carl Gustaf Löwenhielm, posted to Turkey in the 1820s, painted this watercolour. It probably depicts one of the janissaries employed to guard the Swedish mission. UUL.

via the aforementioned consul Claes Grill whom Åkerblad himself had approached for money. The letter is highly emotional with copious Christian references. It painted a bleak picture of the political situation in Stockholm and the catastrophic war with Russia. Åkerblad's father was worried for both his sons and ended by sending greetings from his new wife, Anna Catharina Bourchell, Johan David's stepmother "who longs to see Dearest Son, even if it should be dressed as a Janissary, with beard and sable &c." (Figure 27.)

At this point in Åkerblad's life, in the spring of 1789, it is possible to sum up his first experiences. Unlike any other Swede of his generation he had acquired not only a large set of languages but also entry into the community of European scholars in his fields. During these years he had extended his interests to the history of Semitic languages by studying Phoenician inscriptions and by investigating the languages and literatures of the Eastern Mediterranean.

It is easy to see Åkerblad's formation from a teleological perspective, that is, with the hindsight of his complete career. I have tried to avoid letting his future achievements, or lack of them, influence the narrative above. But it is also true that Åkerblad had the requisites for a great scholarly future. His work in the foreign service had not been entirely successful; on the other hand, we should not take all his complaints seriously. As a matter of fact he had largely managed to attain what he had strived for. He had travelled extensively, albeit on a low budget, but still more or less according to his plan. All the more remarkable, he had managed to do so without any major mishaps: no maladies, no violence, no robberies, and no shipwrecks. The worst thing to have happened so far was the loss of his collection of antiquities in quarantine in Marseille. The question is to what extent these experiences had prepared him for service and promotion in Swedish foreign service.

Who was Åkerblad when he returned? He was an accomplished Greek and oriental scholar with an extensive European network. He had also been made aware that his knowledge had marketable value outside the Swedish context. Was he also a career diplomat lined-up for promotion in state service? According to Åkerblad's own testimony this was something he expected to happen. Such a conviction is hard to understand with the privileged perspective of hindsight. It appears that Åkerblad must have known by this time that it was close to impossible to combine an international scholarly career with work in the diplomatic service.

If Åkerblad did not know it when he left Sweden at the age of twenty, he certainly learned during his travels how important it was to maintain good and frequent relations with the learned societies of one's own country.

The two main Swedish academies of interest to Åkerblad were the Royal Academy of Science [Kungliga Vetenskapsakademien], founded in 1739, and the Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities [Kungliga Vitterhetsakademien], founded in 1753. When Åkerblad returned from his oriental journey he presented the Academy of Science with a small Egyptian mummy in a wooden case that he had acquired in Egypt (Figure 28). It is probable that he had sent the mummy directly to Stockholm



Figure 28. The case of the mummy Åkerblad acquired in Egypt. The casket (height c. 85 cm) bears the name of the boy Hor-em-akhbit. Radiographic investigation approximates his age to around 10 years. The mummy is dated to the 3rd–1st century BCE. Medelhavsmuseet, Stockholm. Photo Ove Kaneberg.

on a merchant ship. His gift was announced in the printed proceedings of the academy.¹⁵

However, it was the Academy of History and Antiquities that was the most important institution to Åkerblad. When he returned to Stockholm in 1793, after his second period in Constantinople, he gave this academy a gift reflecting his own interests: a collection of inscriptions. This probably consisted of a written account of the inscriptions he had copied during his trips that were so far unpublished. The gift was duly recognized in the protocol of the academy: "the Royal Secretary Åkerblad presented a Collection of Greek and Latin inscriptions made by him during a trip in the Levant. The academy, acknowledging the observant eye of the Royal Secretary Åkerblad when he visited these localities, accepted with the greatest pleasure this gift."¹⁶

At the Russo-Swedish War

Åkerblad arrived back in Stockholm at the latest by 25 May 1789.¹⁷ Just over two months later, on the last day of July, he was sent to the war headquarters in Finland. The obvious role for him at the itinerant Swedish court was to translate documents from the Ottoman Empire and to inform the king and his retinue of conditions in Turkey.¹⁸ Negotiations for subsidies from the Ottoman state to support Sweden in the war with Russia were still underway and the court needed a translator to deal with the Turkish correspondence.

Åkerblad continued to petition his superiors for promotion during the war with Russia. He managed to muster support from many parties.¹⁹ His knowledge had made its mark. The former envoy in Constantinople Ulric Celsing, whom Åkerblad had known since his departure for Turkey in 1783, supported him in his quest for a position in the foreign service:

¹⁵ Vetenskapsakademiens protokoll, 4 August 1790, KVA. Printed in the proceedings for 1790, 319.

¹⁶ Vitterhetsakademiens protokoll, 17 September 1794, Protokoll 1791–99, Ämbetsarkivet 2, KVHAA.

¹⁷ *Almänna Tidningar*, 25 May 1789, 82.

¹⁸ JDÅ to Franc, 21 August 1789, Kymmenegård, vol. 26, Inkomna skrivelser (Skr till Franc), UD, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, SNA.

¹⁹ A letter from Heidenstam dated 1 March 1789 is extensively quoted in the deliberations on Åkerblad's appointment: "I cannot but give him [Åkerblad] all round well-deserved praise." 8 September 1789, Kanslikollegium protokoll, SNA.

The envoy Celsing...underlines obsequiously his support in encouraging a person, so important and useful to the service of His Royal Majesty and the Realm, as he is without comparison in his knowledge of the Oriental languages in this country. Furthermore it seems as if the refusal he gave to those who, during his stay in London, tried to persuade him to enter English service with very favourable conditions, could help to convince the King to reward his thus demonstrated loyalty and commendable actions with the discussed letter of appointment.²⁰

Åkerblad used the offer of employment made to him while he was in London as an argument when trying to get a better appointment in Sweden. An example of this strategy was when his rejection of the English offer was retracted in a letter to the royal secretary Johan Albrekt Ehrenström:

I can in no way in Sweden draw [advantages] from my despised knowledge, I have therefore decided to travel to England, something that probably will not be denied me...I thus request most humbly that the Royal Secretary may request a Passport for me from the King, as the only reward for all the industry I have used to make myself worthy of his distinguished service.²¹

A few days later Åkerblad's campaign bore fruit. At the end of September Ehrenström informed the government in Stockholm about the king's decision to appoint Åkerblad as Turkish interpreter and as protocol secretary in the foreign service. A few months later Åkerblad wrote to the king requesting that he be paid from the date of appointment and not with the customary six month delay. He argued that the accrued salary should thus be regarded as a way of paying him for his trips in the Levant.²²

Negotiations with Turkey eventually had a successful outcome. The Swedish war effort was dependent on whatever economic support it could get and it was important that the treaty with Turkey be ratified as soon as possible so that the Turkish payments could start. The king exhorted the foreign service in Stockholm to send couriers with the ratified treaty to Constantinople via Germany and Italian ports thereby avoiding passing through France and the disturbances there. He was also worried that a "Russian tool" might hurt the couriers.²³

²⁰ Franc to Ehrenström, 16 June 1789, Stockholm, Åkerblad, X 241, UUL.

²¹ JDÅ to Ehrenström, 19 September 1789, Finland, Åkerblad, X 241, UUL.

²² Ehrenström to Franc, 26, 30 September 1789, Lovisa, vol. 24, Inkomna skrivelser (Skr till Franc), UD, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, SNA; 13 October 1789, Kanslikollegium protokoll, SNA; 29 September 1789, Protokoll i utrikes ärenden, SNA; JDÅ to Gustav III, arrival date 11 February 1790, Biographica Å, vol. 1, SNA.

²³ Ehrenström to Franc, 19 November 1789, Borgå, vol. 24, Inkomna skrivelser (Skr till Franc), UD, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, SNA.

During his stay at the Swedish war headquarters in Finland in the summer and autumn of 1789 Åkerblad not only dealt with Turkish correspondence but also interpreted and spoke with ‘Turks.’ There were Russian militaries who spoke Turkish, as well as a Tatar captain, Aḥmad Āghā al-Qarīmī, “a good Muslim” as Åkerblad put it, who had been captured by Swedish forces. Åkerblad had been instructed by the king to keep the Tatar officer company and report what he knew. Åkerblad met king Gustav III and presented a report on 10 September where he forwarded for information from “his Turks” about the arrival of a new Ottoman envoy in Moscow and its impact on Russian politics.²⁴

Yet most of the Turkish speakers that Åkerblad came into contact with in Finland were not Russian militaries but Turkish prisoners of war. These prisoners had been captured during Russia’s war with Turkey in the Black Sea and had subsequently been moved to the Baltic front and used in the war against Sweden.

The war was suspended during the winter and Åkerblad returned to Stockholm. No great campaigns were foreseen until the spring and summer. He did not want to go back to the war, but since naval activities were starting again his presence could be needed on the front. Ehrenström wrote from Finland in the spring of 1790: “when the sea campaign starts one foresees that Turkish prisoners of war in the Russian navy must be dealt with, and then the Royal Secretary Åkerblad can probably not avoid being commanded here to Finland as Turkish interpreter.”²⁵

We do not know whether Åkerblad returned to Finland during the spring of 1790. The course of the war shifted several times during the spring and summer. After several defeats the Swedish navy won a naval victory in July that forced the Russians to negotiate for peace. Eventually a peace treaty was signed in August 1790 to *status quo ante bellum*. The borders existing before the Swedish attack were re-established. While the war was of great importance for Sweden, Russia regarded it rather as a distraction from its more important goal of southward expansion.²⁶ Sweden’s peace

²⁴ JDÅ to Franc, 21 August 1789, Kymmenegård, vol. 26, Inkomna skrivelser (Skr till Franc), UD, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, SNA; JDÅ to Ehrenström, 10 September 1789, Finland, Åkerblad, X 241, UUL; Åkerblad took the opportunity to compile a list of Tatar words during his meetings with the captain. Vat. lat. fol. 13v.

²⁵ Ehrenström to Franc, 20 April 1790, Borgå, vol. 24, Inkomna skrivelser (Skr till Franc), UD, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, SNA.

²⁶ Andreas Bode, *Die Flottenpolitik Katharinas II und die Konflikte mit Schweden und der Türkei (1768–1792)* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1979), 113ff.

with Russia broke the treaty signed with the Ottoman state only the previous year, a breach that was not looked upon lightly by the Porte.

In fact, peace with Russia in 1790 was the beginning of the end of Swedish interest in the Ottoman Empire. This loss of interest might ultimately be the explanation for Åkerblad's disappointing career. He had gained a profound knowledge of the Ottoman Empire and the Mediterranean world exactly at the moment when it fell out of political importance for Sweden. His application for the position of Turkish translator had underlined the utility of this knowledge that was soon to become less important: "to know a nation [Turkey] that thousands of reasons, but principally its relations with Sweden, makes so exceptional."²⁷

Even if Åkerblad was not sent back to the war he still was in contact with Turkish prisoners. He described the fate of some of the Turks captured during the war against Russia:

the fifty odd Turks that came here with the Amphion last autumn [after the peace treaty with Russia in the summer of 1790] were in October embarked on a ship chartered by the king destined for Constantinople, but as it happened with great secrecy, I do not know why, I wish that my name not be mentioned as the one that revealed it.²⁸

The main assignment of the chartered ship was to deliver gifts to the Bey of Tunis to buy peace for Swedish Mediterranean shipping. But not all of the captured Turks wanted to go back. As in many recent wars, to return to the home country after having been a prisoner of war can indeed be dangerous:

the Aga remained in Elsinore, where he could not be induced to return to the ship. He probably feared the reception here [in Constantinople] as he had joined Russian service voluntarily and was taken *les armes à la main*, something that the other Turks, that did not like him particularly, did not neglect to inform us. I think he has returned to Russia.²⁹

Thirty-nine of the fifty-three Turkish prisoners joined Tunisian service when the ship put in at Tunis. Eventually the remaining thirteen seamen arrived in Constantinople in June 1791. The diplomat who delivered

²⁷ JDÅ to Chancery Board, received 8 June 1789, Kanslitjänstemäns ämbetsmemorial mm samt ansökningar, allmän serie 1710–1800, Kanslikollegium, SNA.

²⁸ JDÅ to Gjörrwell, 11 January [1791], no. 4, Ep G 7:13, KB. For a full treatment of this episode see my: "With the Sabre in one Hand and the Koran in the Other: Turkish Seamen in the Baltic and the Decline of Swedish-Ottoman Relations in the 1790s," *Forum Navale* 66 (2010): 16–43.

²⁹ Carl Gustaf Adlerberg to Franc, 15 May 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 77, SNA.

the 'gift' to the sultan was presented with an ermine fur coat.³⁰ He also reported that the Kapitan Pasha—the supreme commander of the Ottoman navy—took an immediate interest in the seamen:

They have already related their experiences . . . to the Kapitan Pasha, who at a whim summoned some of them to deliver accounts of their experiences. Not many Turks will have undertaken such long journeys at sea and over land and these men will probably be celebrated for months in the coffee houses as they describe their adventures.³¹

A couple of months after the group's arrival in Constantinople the same diplomat related an event which would have terrified the sailors that had been Russian captives: "The Capitan Pascha has had the entire 18-man crew of a Kirlangitz [a 'swallow,' a small fast boat with two or three masts] hung, on the allegation that they were Russian spies."³²

The release of prisoners of war was certainly appreciated by the Porte but, as everyone was aware, this 'present' hardly cost the Swedes and probably did not result in any change in the fractious relationship caused by Sweden's breach of loyalty.

³⁰ Gjörrwell, *Svenska archivum innehållande handlingar uti Svea rikes historia*, 2 vols. (Stockholm 1790–93), 1:317.

³¹ Adlerberg to Franc, 15 May 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 77, SNA.

³² Adlerberg to Franc, 8 July 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 77, SNA.

CHAPTER NINE

TO CONSTANTINOPLE AND BACK

The political situation in Europe when Åkerblad returned to Constantinople in 1791 was very different to his earlier posting. He had become more familiar with Swedish politics and had witnessed the Russo-Swedish war at close hand. As the French Revolution proceeded it became clear that major change in European politics was possible. Having just missed the first stages of the revolution in Paris in the spring of 1789 Åkerblad had observed the immediate effects of the French events on Swedish politics.

It is difficult to overestimate the repercussions of the French Revolution that were felt in Sweden. Gustav III was horrified by the events in France; any attack on a European monarch was considered an affront to royal power. The king unrealistically began to plan a European coalition against the new government in France.

The political upheavals in Europe also had consequences in Constantinople. Relations between the various missions reflected the insecure political circumstances. The revolution had questioned the strength of old alliances, but the so-called French Revolutionary Wars, which were going to sort enemies from friends, had not yet started and no one could be sure whom to trust.

The Porte had, however, already had concrete proof of one of its old allies' untrustworthiness when Sweden's separate peace with Russia broke the treaty with the Porte. Åkerblad's former protector in Constantinople, the minister Heidenstam, had had to bear the brunt of justified Turkish discontentment and he was recalled in March 1791. Ottoman subsidies stopped when the Russo-Swedish war ended and the situation in continental Europe became Gustav III's main preoccupation. Sweden's political focus shifted from Russia and the Ottoman Empire to other projects.

The new minister in Constantinople was Pehr Olof von Asp (1745–1808). He had already worked at several Swedish missions and had been close to the king in the 1780s. He was an able and judicious civil servant who had fallen foul of the king's favour when he had criticised the king's increasingly autocratic tendencies. The appointment was perceived as a sort of exile by many observers.

Åkerblad reluctantly accepted his return to Constantinople; Asp needed a Swede who was familiar with the local politics and who spoke Turkish.

The two met in Berlin where Asp also had an audience with the Prussian king. No doubt the discussion dealt with the Swedish king's plan to fight the republican French government. They also visited the Turkish envoy; Asp was probably instructed to sound out the Turkish representatives on their attitudes towards Sweden. Åkerblad's language-skill made the usual impression: "The Royal Secretary Åkerblad was present. His knowledge and proficiency in the Turkish, Greek and Arabic languages astonished both the Envoy and the interpreter."¹ The Turkish interpreter was a "Greek merchant" who confirmed Åkerblad's knowledge of Modern Greek. Asp, having quickly understood the central position the interpreters held in the communication with the Turks added a comment on the Berlin dragoon: "The Greek interpreter, with well-trained cunning and the gift of speech, probably runs the entire Mission, and does not seem to be the one to trust with hazardous confidences."

Åkerblad made his usual learned visits and commented on the library in Berlin. He noted the system for financing acquisitions with interest: "The library in Berlin supposedly has 200,000 vols., something I do not believe. It holds a few hundred Manuscripts, including some Oriental ones. Work is being done on the Catalogue. When books are published in Prussia two copies are sent to the library, one is kept there and the other is sold, thus a fund is created for the acquisition of other books."²

From Berlin they continued through Leipzig and Dresden where Åkerblad delivered letters from friends in Sweden to German scholars. The Leipzig library did not appeal to him, it "looks dusty and contains few books—20,000 volumes altogether."³ He paid particular attention to whether the libraries in Germany had any oriental manuscripts. He had now visited Paris and London, knew libraries and scholars in both cities and could compare the standing of oriental scholarship in several European nations.

Åkerblad's learned exchange continued in Vienna where he stayed for more than two months during the latter part of the summer and early autumn. This gave him ample time to investigate the city and its cultural life. He met with a number of Austrian scholars and notables.⁴ His

¹ Asp, draft letter to Gustav III, 19 June 1791, F 812 b, UUL.

² 16 June 1791, Vat. lat., fol. 1r.

³ 24 June 1791, Vat. lat., fol. 1r.

⁴ Ibid. The poet and orientalist (Åkerblad's definition) Lorenz Leopold Haschka 1749–1827, the writer Johann Baptist Alxinger 1755–97, the poet Alois Blumauer 1755–98, the poet and librarian Johann Michael Denis 1729–1800, the Hofrath and philanthropist Franz Anton Sonnenfels 1735–1806, the botanist Nikolaus Joseph Jaquin 1727–1814, the physician-in-ordinary at the court Anton Störck 1731–1803.

comment was characteristic: "I met some scholars of merit, but the majority of those who bear this label in Vienna are worthless bunglers."⁵ He lamented that he could not meet Baron Gottfried van Swieten who was then in the countryside. Whilst he did not meet van Swieten, who was the prefect at the library and an important patron of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, he did form an idea about the social life and occupations of the Viennese: "In general the Viennese are tremendously carnal. Eating and sleeping are their foremost occupations. Afterwards follows Musique, which they are masters in. They put on a full dozen performances every day... Bookshops are filled with novels, and learning comes last. The library is fine."⁶

He also mentions the Academy of Marie-Therese, the *Kaiserlich-königliche Akademie für Orientalische Sprachen* instituted by the empress in 1754.⁷ The Habsburg Empire had a long border with Ottoman lands and there was constant interaction between the realms. The primary goal of the academy was to educate interpreters to serve in the administration and secure a steady supply of Austrian language personnel. Åkerblad could not fail to observe the differences between the arbitrary language education available in Sweden and the institutional framework he saw in Austria.⁸ From Vienna he quickly continued to Constantinople through Hungary, Banat, Wallachia, Bulgaria and Thrace arriving at the beginning of October 1791.

Asp had done his best to get any available information on the situation in Turkey before his departure from Sweden. He asked the diplomat Ulric Celsing, who apart from a few short breaks had lived in Constantinople from 1755 to 1779, to brief him.⁹ Celsing had experience of the changing nature of Constantinople politics and underlined the importance of avoiding too close contact with other foreign communities, in particular the French. This minimized the risk of becoming involved in intrigues that would harm Sweden's reputation with the Porte. He continued by

⁵ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Vat. lat., fol. 1r.

⁸ Alexandra Joukova, "Ein Glück für jedem fremden Mann, der selbst mit Türken sprechen kann." Zur Sprachausbildung vor und kurz nach Etablierung der Orientalischen Akademie;" Ernst Dieter Petrich, "Die Anfänge der Orientalischen Akademie," both in *250 Jahre: Von der Orientalischen zur Diplomatischen Akademie in Wien*, ed. Oliver Rathkolb (Innsbruck: Studien-Verl., 2004).

⁹ Ulric Celsing, Kl. Env:s Ulric v: Celsings svar å de af v: Asp honom skriftel. tillställda frågor rörde Swänska Beskickningen vid Porten, December 1790, F 616 b, UUL; *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* (hereafter SBL), 8:228.

warning that when Porte officials sought advice from Swedish diplomats the memorials translated into Turkish and presented to the Porte should never be signed. This was a way of securing Swedish independence in relation to the factional struggles within the Ottoman government. Celsing also informed Asp that the Turks often remarked on the unsettled nature of western statecraft, especially noting its extraordinary opportunism. The Turks believed that a nation that wanted to uphold a friendship with another nation should continuously show proofs of such friendship.

Asp knew that he was entering into a delicate situation. But instead of complaining about the relationship with the Porte he wrote about the rigid formalities within the European diplomatic community: "The ceremonial visits are an unpleasant business. Everyone agrees on this but never has diplomatic 'Peasant-pride' yet managed to abolish them."¹⁰ He used a Swedish expression, *Bondhögfärd*, to mock excessive or misplaced pride and described the rituals with irony. Asp listed the proceedings with disdain and added: "Concerning the order of precedence of the visits, I advise no one to neglect it. That would be high-treason."

When Asp attended his first audience at the Porte in December 1791, he was surprised by the reception he got from the sultan: "I had been told that etiquette proscribes the Sultan from looking at the person granted the audience. It was the other way around, he fixed my forehead so insistently that I could not with decency look around in the hall as I had wanted."¹¹ The sultan observing Asp was Selim III (reign 1789–1807). Selim was instrumental in initiating reforms that led to major changes in the Ottoman state.¹² After describing his impressions, mostly in positive terms, Asp finished with a comparison between the different manners and rituals: "These ceremonies are interesting for the mix of dignity, splendour, stillness, in addition to the maintenance of ancient and to us Christians so different customs, it is difficult to say with impartiality which is the most right and natural, if at all such a judgment can be applied to such customs."¹³ If Asp could be accused of using stereotypes when describing his foreign interlocutors it usually occurred in relation to his European colleagues rather than the Turks (Figure 29).

¹⁰ Asp to Franc, 25 November 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 7, SNA; Paul Mohn, "Några drag ur de svenska diplomaternas liv i Konstantinopel under 1700-talet," *Svenska Orientsällskapets Årsbok*, 1926/1927: 70–92.

¹¹ Asp's dispatch, 24 December 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 78, SNA.

¹² Stanford J. Shaw, *Between old and new: The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1971).

¹³ Asp's dispatch, 24 December 1791, Constantinople, Turcica 78, SNA.



Figure 29. Asp wrote that the view from the window of the legation was an antidote to the displeasures of his posting. The view is from the upper windows of the Palais de Suède in Pera. A. I. Melling, *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople et des rives du Bosphore d'après les dessins de M. Melling* (Paris, 1809–19), pl. 9. UUL.

Asp did not make the mistake of underestimating his counterpart. Other western diplomats had reached the same conclusion. The British ambassador Sir James Porter (in service 1747–62) wrote: “There is no Christian power which can vie with the Porte for care and exactitude in the several offices, business is done with the greatest accuracy, in any important document, words are weighed, and that signification constantly selected which may most conduce to their own advantage.”¹⁴ Porter claimed that the Porte only delivered results when it was in its interest to do so, but in this it was no different from any other nation.

Asp found the local foreigners difficult to deal with and the social milieu stifling: “Without literature, without spectacles, without music and normal pastimes, without intimate fellowship with somebody, without . . . journals or knowledge about the current events in the state . . . gossip and intrigue . . . is their only, or at least principal occupation.”¹⁵

The most important issue for Asp was the changing political situation. Asp followed Celsing’s advice to avoid the French, and their new ‘agent’—republican France was not recognized by the Porte and could not be represented by an official ambassador—noted Asp’s distant manners with

¹⁴ George Larpent, *Turkey: Its History and Progress: From the Journals and Correspondence of Sir James Porter*, 2 vols. (London 1854), 1:268.

¹⁵ Asp to Franc, 25 November 1791, Constantinople, draft, F 812 b, UUL.

surprise: "The Swedish legation showed such reserve that it would have been suspicious if one did not know the representatives of this power as commendable men."¹⁶ Another example of Asp following Celsing's advice is found in a document drafted by Åkerblad. It is a memorial on how to accommodate the Swedish officers who were sent to Constantinople to assist the reforms in the Ottoman navy and army. In the text it is made explicit that the Swedish mission should not sign documents negotiating sensitive military matters.¹⁷

As a favour from the Porte each mission received the right to trade in addition to the 'capitulations' that guaranteed the trade of the foreign merchants in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸ Asp wrote a long memorandum on the problems at the Swedish mission caused by competition for these privileges.¹⁹ Erik Bergstedt also described the system and underlined how it often led to conflicts. The Swedish mission was allotted a number of such trade permits, *barattärer* and *firmanlicks* as Bergstedt called them.²⁰ They could be sold to merchants, through the office of the missions' first interpreter, either for cash payment or for a percentage of the profit the merchant gained by not having to pay taxes etc. Bergstedt was clear that the trade in permits pushed diplomatic personnel to seek advantages from the Porte, sometimes to the detriment of the politics the diplomats had been instructed to follow.

Regicide and Turmoil

In the spring of 1792 disturbing news arrived from Stockholm. Gustav III had been shot during a masquerade at the Stockholm opera that March and died of an infection thirteen days later. Asp's correspondence was frequent in the wake of the king's death. The change of regent was formally announced at the Porte on 25 May.

¹⁶ The French representative Descorches to the commissaire des relations extérieures, 5 Frimaire an III (25 November 1794), in E. de Marcère, *Une ambassade à Constantinople: La politique orientale de la Révolution française*, 2 vols. (Paris: Alcan, 1927), 2:76–77, see also 1:392.

¹⁷ Asp in Åkerblad's handwriting, Observations le 19 Janv. 1793, F 812 b, UUL.

¹⁸ Edhem Eldem, "Capitulations and western trade," in *Cambridge history of Turkey*, vol. 3: *The later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, ed. Suraiya Faroqhi (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 319ff; Maurits H. van den Boogert, *The Capitulations and the Ottoman Legal System: Qadis, Consuls, and Beraths in the 18th Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

¹⁹ Asp, Annotations relativement aux Interprètes de Suède, April 1793, F 812 b, UUL.

²⁰ Bergstedt, *Resa till Propontiden*, 3:141.

A great part of the correspondence to the government in Stockholm was sent in cipher. Ciphery and deciphering dispatches was one of Åkerblad's most tedious tasks. Personal communications were often sent *en clair*, that is unciphered. Åkerblad's custom of writing personal letters without ciphering them would later be held against him when it became known that Swedish mail was opened and read in Vienna. The use of ciphers in the diplomatic service was a necessary tool to at least attempt to keep information out of the hands of one's enemies, or allies for that matter.

Åkerblad wrote to his friend Olof Swartz *en clair* in December 1792 commenting on political events in Sweden. It is difficult to imagine Åkerblad putting his frank comments in writing in the climate of political repression and censorship that had marked the last years of Gustav III's reign. As he reminded his friend Swartz, such political issues could not have been openly discussed the previous year in Stockholm because someone might have been listening. Åkerblad expressed satisfaction with the political changes:

I am delighted by what Sir tells me about the present state of affairs at home, ubi sentire qua velis et qua sentias, dicere licet.—How enormously distant did we not consider these so desired conditions to be when we a year ago whispered to each other with concern about the then present oppression and all the new misfortunes that were threatening poor [Sweden]—nuovi ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo!—Freedom of the press in Sweden?²¹

The political situation in Stockholm had become increasingly oppressive during recent years. Censorship was strict and power was concentrated in the hands of the king and his close protégées. The king's decision to go to war against Russia was the most obvious example of increased autocracy; the king initiated war against the will of the parliament. Åkerblad had been able to closely observe the disasters of royal policy. To make his point he quoted Tacitus' *History*, underlining how the change in regime brought back freedom of personal expression: "when we may think what we please, and express what we think." What had earlier only been discussed in private and with discretion could now be said openly. A new Freedom of the Press act was proclaimed on 11 July 1792. Sweden was now governed by a regency; the crown prince Gustaf Adolf was too young to head the government. The dead king's brother, Duke Karl of Södermanland, was formally head of government but the administration was to a large extent run by Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm (1756–1813).

²¹ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

Åkerblad's second Latin quote, from Virgil's *Eclogues*, heralded the political change spearheaded by events in France, describing how a new period of history had been initiated: "the majestic roll of circling centuries begins anew." The French revolutionaries were obsessively interested in past civilizations and empires as a means to understand history and historical change. Was history cyclical or was progress possible? The changes in Europe led to profound reconsideration of historical philosophy. Whether it was a new era that had started, or as Virgil would imply a cycle starting again, was not yet ascertained. Åkerblad saw it as political change that had been hard to predict only a few years earlier.

Åkerblad continued to discuss which books were worth reading in this moment of upheaval:

But my best friend, in the Swedish papers I do not see, except for the French Constitution in translation together with Payne's Rights of Man, a single book announced that I think will at least with time be worthy of this freedom. Everything is Theological and Romantic twaddle and nonsense of which we already had enough. Please do me the pleasure of letting me know if something really excellent is published.²²

The two books found worthy were the French constitution and the *Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine. Paine's hugely influential book was published in London in March 1791 and written in defence of French developments in answer to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* which had appeared in November 1790. Needless to say, Paine's treatise was immediately banned in Sweden.²³

Åkerblad had previously been critical of the "petty and ignoble" French taste and of the lack of independent Swedish poets. Swedes merely aped continental fashions, he wrote in his letter from Marseille in early 1789. But, after spending a couple of years in Stockholm and Finland, he had modified his caustic judgment somewhat:

I do believe that we have good people who know how to write, and who have written; but the fear of Kastenhof and Smegatan [Stockholm jails] is older and stronger than confidence in the Freedom of the Press act.—What is Thorild doing?²⁴

²² JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

²³ Thomas von Vegesack, *Smak för frihet: Opinionsbildningen i Sverige 1755–1830* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2001), 120ff.

²⁴ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

Even if there were writers who could take advantage of the new freedom of press, the fear of incrimination was still too strong. Not showing too much confidence in the Freedom of the Press act would itself prove to be a good strategy, as censorship was soon re-introduced. Åkerblad was again asking about Thomas Thorild: what was he up to?

Had he known, he would have been less optimistic. Two days before Åkerblad wrote the letter to Swartz Thorild had been summoned to court.²⁵ He was to answer for an essay in which he had promoted still greater freedom of the press and advocated constitutional changes, such as removing the division of estates in the parliament. Having passionately pleaded for his opinions in court Thorild was arrested the same day. On the way to the next court session, on 24 December, he was accompanied by a crowd demanding better conditions in his jail and the opening of the court proceedings to the public. This was reported in the European press. The French *Le Moniteur universel* interpreted it as the beginnings of a Swedish revolution. Thorild's carriage "was accompanied by this immense cortège that made the shouts *long live Thorild, long live Freedom* roar as far as into the palace of the regent. The night went on in the same way and the people are still in a state of uproar. We learn about similar news from several provinces."²⁶ *Le Moniteur* was a government organ and expressed the opinions of the revolutionaries when it continued reporting optimistically on Swedish events: "The 22nd has been a day of real triumph for Mr. Thorild or rather for liberty. One can regard the revolutions as made in Sweden."²⁷ The Paris paper was not completely in touch with Swedish politics and it had to retract its optimistic prognosis a few days later: "The events of the 22nd did not have any outcome."²⁸ On 25 December the Freedom of the Press act was severely restricted and the brief moment of freedom of expression came to an end.

Thorild was initially condemned to a prison sentence. During the trial news reached Stockholm of the execution of king Louis XVI of France in January 1793. In the next instance the prosecutor was pleading for the death penalty. Anyone perceived as a promoter of the revolution could now also be accused of supporting regicide. But Åkerblad was not yet

²⁵ Stellan Arvidson, *Thorild*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Carlsson, 1989–93), 2:605ff.

²⁶ *Le Moniteur universel*, 21 January 1793, no. 21, 105. The *Politisches Journal* (Hamburg), 11 January 1793, accounted for the happenings from a conservative perspective.

²⁷ *Le Moniteur universel*, 23 January 1793, no. 23, 113.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 January 1793, no. 26, 127.

aware of these developments at Christmastime in 1792 when he wrote Swartz. At the beginning of March Thorild was condemned to exile.

Åkerblad, who knew of the intrigues at the Swedish court and what the death of the king must have entailed for his protégées, made an ironic remark on the changing tunes of those who had previously been the king's flatterers. He rightly imagined that instead of praising the former royal darlings the court bards now sung different sycophantic songs: "I suppose the court bards have changed their tunes according to the circumstances—and the singers of Armfelt are now probably the singers of freedom."²⁹

He continued to voice his surprise about the happenings in Sweden: "I cannot avoid repeating my astonishment over what Sir has told me that people have begun to renounce their nobility. Is such a big victory against prejudice possible within the noble estate? Or is it only proof of a few individual ways of thinking?" This was a clear expression of his contempt for the institution of nobility. Åkerblad, who came from a humble family, even though of some means, knew perfectly well what it meant not to be noble. A career in the foreign service was dependent on birth, and few common men could afford to be in high positions of state service even if by some chance they happened to be promoted. That Åkerblad was not noble was one of the determining factors that hindered his diplomatic career. Some of his colleagues were obsessed with the possibility of ennoblement, but Åkerblad never seemed to nurture such dreams.

Even though his anti-noble standpoint in 1792 was clear there is a question over whether Åkerblad assumed noble airs at the end of his life. When he lived in Rome he was sometimes referred to as 'barone.' After his death the Swedish consul in Rome stated in a letter to Stockholm that Åkerblad had registered himself in the parish as an Irish baron. The consul was apparently upset by Åkerblad's alleged denial of Swedish origins but his making himself out to be a 'barone' was not worth commenting on.³⁰

Erik Bergstedt serves as a comparison to Åkerblad; he had a more successful career as a non-noble diplomat and civil servant. Son of a country

²⁹ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA. Gustaf Mauritz Armfelt (1757–1814) was one of the assassinated king's closest protégées. He fell out of favour with the new regime and had to leave Sweden.

³⁰ The Roman yearly parish census, the so called *stato delle anime* is legendarily difficult to follow and fraught with errors. Åkerblad was for example noted 1817 as "Giovanni d'Archebran svedese, 52 [years]." Carl Bildt, "Personhistoriska uppgifter om svenskar i Rom 1750–1850," *Personhistorisk tidskrift* 5 (1903): 1–6, corrections 158–59; Ulisse Pentini to Chancery Board, 10 February 1819, Rome, Skrivelser från konsuler, vol. 66, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

vicar, Bergstedt had both the talent and the ambition to achieve social elevation in the second half of the eighteenth century. He reputedly petitioned the king for ennoblement when he was at the royal court in Aachen in 1791 during Gustav III's attempt to form a coalition against the French revolutionary government.

A list compiled by Bergstedt in 1795 of colleagues who had worked at the legation in Paris sheds interesting light on his grievances.³¹ Beside each name on the list the year of entry into foreign service is given and when, where, and to what position the individual was promoted. The career paths of noblemen developed considerably quicker than those of non-nobles, and no commoner became minister or chief of mission. Bergstedt put himself at the bottom of the list and concluded that after almost 16 years of service he had not yet been promoted to a high position. Bergstedt became Chancery Councillor in 1799, his first truly high-level office. He was finally ennobled in 1809. He was surely happy about his ennoblement but in many ways it came too late. His career as a diplomat was long over. Although being noble was still convenient it would never again have the same importance.

It was difficult to reach the highest positions in the state without being of noble birth. The second best option was to be ennobled during service; Bergstedt's ambition to join the noble estate should be understood from this perspective. Åkerblad was likewise aware of the necessity of being noble to get promoted. Later in Constantinople when he made suggestions about who should be nominated as his successor he put it in clear terms: "I know that Palin in Vienna wants to come to Constantinople, but he as me is unborn [ofödd] or without birth [utan födsel] and Secretaries in Constantinople ought to have the quality of nobility if a new minister is called for in all haste."³² Åkerblad's use of "unborn" and "without birth" to refer to not being noble seems to have been his own invention. Having a member of the nobility as the second man at the mission in Constantinople was particularly relevant given the turbulent political situation there, where he could take the place of a recalled envoy at short notice.

Up until the point when Åkerblad renounced Swedish service in 1804, much of the available sources for his activities consist of correspondence from foreign service archives. Åkerblad's official letters and dispatches are

³¹ Lista på de senaste svenska Ambassade Secreterare i Paris, med anförde årtal af deras tjänstetid då de blifvit befodrade, fols. 675–77, F 651 a, UUL; see also Bergstedt's own CV from 1799, fol. 121.

³² JDA to Rosenhane, 9 April 1796, Kanslitjänstemännens konc. och mottagna skrivelser, SNA.

often petitions of sorts. Even many of Åkerblad's private letters are to a certain degree pleas; a typical case is when Åkerblad asks for Gjörwell's support.

The tone of his letters to superiors varies from factual to melodramatic. During the war in Finland he wrote to the royal secretary Ehrenström and pleaded for a salary: "please say a word in favour of the humble interpreter to these lords [the king and entourage] who runs the risk of dying of cold and hunger this winter if his Majesty does not grant him a salary."³³ Åkerblad's pleas were successful and he was finally officially appointed as interpreter and secretary. When reading Åkerblad's early correspondence one might get the impression that his demands were never granted, but until the 1790s when his services were of interest to the state, this was not the case. Åkerblad was not successful in his later career, but this might have been rather an effect of changed political circumstances than the fact that he was considered a troublemaker in Stockholm.

The author of the only biographical essay on Åkerblad, Christian Callmer, did for example not write about the conflict between Åkerblad and Mouradgea d'Ohsson, which I describe below, even though he knew of it. Callmer chose to present a sanitized picture. These particular details were seen as unnecessary in describing Åkerblad's life. The culture of submission and petition was merely considered to be an integral part of the relationship between subalterns and superiors. Åkerblad himself used the word 'subaltern' when he described his position.³⁴ The petitions are highly formulaic, repetitive, and can be seen as a vehicle for confirming the respective status of sender and receiver. Private letters sometimes counterbalance the long series of petitions. In Åkerblad's case the 1792 letter to Swartz gives a very different view of his political opinions and how he despised the institution of nobility and the lack of political freedom in Sweden. It is hard to avoid the impression that a truer picture of Åkerblad's opinions and ways of expressing himself emerges in his private letters.

Supporting the Revolution

Erik Bergstedt was critical of the king's autocratic tendencies and sympathized with the change in France, as so many did in the first years of

³³ JDÅ to Ehrenström, 10 September 1789, Finland, Åkerblad, X 241, UUL.

³⁴ JDÅ to Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm, 2 November 1795, Marseille, Reuterholmska samlingen, E-5146, SNA.

the Revolution. He would nevertheless not have put into writing what Åkerblad did:

How I admire the French, and how I would worship them if instead of occupying themselves with wretchedness they would make use of the occasion after the terror they have struck into Despots to re-establish calm and confidence in themselves. But not yet is a single line of the New Constitution ready and still they amuse themselves by tormenting the poor Louis Bourbon . . . But maybe I do not know enough of all this. And I will travel to France as soon as I get permission to leave from here, to inform myself there and then in the most exact way about everything concerning this country, something which every free man should consider *his concern*.³⁵

Åkerblad wrote this a few weeks before the execution of King Louis XVI on 21 January 1793. The so-promising revolution was losing momentum and had started to become embroiled in power struggles. The influence on the rest of Europe, still run by 'despots', was diminishing. Åkerblad admitted he did not know enough about the developments. The flow of news to Constantinople was slow, but at least not restricted by censorship. He never did get permission to go to France to investigate the situation himself. Less than a month later the French king was beheaded and the period leading up to the Terror started.

Bergstedt, who had worked at the mission in Paris since June 1791, was instructed to report to Stockholm privately about the Swedish ambassador Staël von Holstein, who was suspected of sympathizing with the revolutionary government. The ambassador was recalled to Stockholm in December. Bergstedt was promoted to *chargé d'affaires*, the highest Swedish representative left in Paris. He sang a very different tune from Åkerblad. He was rather more in line with Åkerblad's despised court bards when he wrote to a friend in Stockholm after being informed that the king had been wounded at the Opera masquerade. After voicing his dismay—initially it was only reported that the king had been wounded and not gravely at that—he described the reaction of the French court:

His French Majesty has been highly affected by our King's danger. I met aforesaid high person last Saturday promenading on horse. His cavaliers recognized me and were ordered to ride up to me to ask for news on the King's conditions. His French Majesty was so moved that the promenade continued only at a walking pace under a sombre silence; one of the Cavaliers asked his Majesty if he did not like to gallop, the King answered: Non, je ne suis sorti que parce qu'il fallait absolument que je me promenade, mais

³⁵ JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

je ne galoppe pas [No, I only went out because I absolutely had to go for a ride, but I do not gallop], and the promenade continued under an unbroken gloomy silence.³⁶

Bergstedt continued and candidly told his friend in Stockholm how the attack on the Swedish king had paradoxically given him an advantageous situation at the French court, with unusual direct access to both king and queen:

At the Court the King asked for me. I had attended prayers for the [Swedish] King in the chapel and had thus the misfortune of being late. But the Queen spoke at length with me at her Court and in the evening at her Games. This exceptional distinction that has been bestowed upon me has directed much attention towards my persona and given me a kind of standing that much increases the pleasure of my presence here. I am here in the happiest conditions I could wish for. Even if I was Swedish Envoy I could not be better treated.

He wrote this on 9 April, his thirty-second birthday. He did not yet know that the Swedish king was dead and could not foresee that the monarchy in France was enjoying its final months. In less than a year the French king would be executed.

While Bergstedt blissfully enjoyed his position in Paris, Åkerblad was doing all he could to get recalled to Sweden or posted elsewhere in Europe. Åkerblad's superior, Asp, hoped the authorities in Stockholm would promote Åkerblad and fulfil the promises made to him so that he might decide to stay longer in Constantinople. Asp was in dire need of a good translator and someone he could trust in affairs both inside and outside of the mission. Asp wrote to the responsible in Stockholm on behalf of Åkerblad requesting that he could: "keep his salary and be able to do the tour which, at his departure from Stockholm, was promised him by the King [and] I do not doubt that . . . [a promotion] would cure him from his present homesickness."³⁷ Åkerblad had been assured another journey to the East by Gustav III, but royal promises evaporated with the death of the king. Despite Asp's hopes that Åkerblad would stay his pleas were successful and Asp eventually supported Åkerblad's request for *rappel*. After commenting that Åkerblad somewhat lacked "stiffness in character" he still described Åkerblad in flattering terms:

³⁶ Bergstedt to Rosenstein, 9 April 1792, Paris, F 651 a, UUL.

³⁷ Asp dispatch, 10 April 1793, Constantinople, Turcica 80, SNA.

The Royal Secretary Åkerblad has talent, is clever and has more than common knowledge in several subjects, he would fulfil any task assigned to him with distinction—he is thorough in his duties and has good power of comprehension, as well as being of proven discretion and reliable in important things and jealous of his honour.³⁸

This judgment, which was finally sent to Stockholm, was not easily arrived at. It is possible to follow the drafting of the passage in Asp's papers. The draft is heavily edited with many cancellations and changes. Asp struggled with how to describe Åkerblad's merits without being entirely positive. The continuation of the passage quoted above, but finally not sent to Stockholm, reads:

he is of proven discretion and reliable in important things, though he is still afflicted by a certain infantile conceit and a more than commonly lasting confusion that sometimes makes him difficult for others and too hasty in judgements. Sure of his own judgement in cases where he is not familiar with all the relevant circumstances, which in matters of less importance has made him set aside the orderliness which can be gained only by completely getting to know all the issues, not having had an enduring position where such knowledge can be gained, should he get such a position he would soon get that needed experience, especially as the smallest imprudence even in insignificant matters in foreign places and in a place as intriguing as this easily may lead to unpleasant consequences.³⁹

Åkerblad was just about to turn thirty and it seems he had not yet acquired all the necessary qualities needed for diplomatic service. Asp was in general positive towards Åkerblad and when the final version was sent to Stockholm he had no qualms about recommending him for other duties and deleted the passage mentioning Åkerblad's problems in the draft.

Erik Bergstedt left Paris in the summer of 1792 when the Swedish mission closed and diplomatic relations with France had been severed. He was sent to London where he was ordered to continue his secret reporting to Stockholm, this time watching the London envoy Baron Gustaf Adam von Nolcken. At the end of 1793 Bergstedt took leave and embarked on an almost four year long trip. In 1794 he visited Constantinople and Egypt. He stayed at the Swedish mission and Asp had the opportunity to get to know him thoroughly. Asp wrote to Stockholm recommending Bergstedt as his preferred successor as envoy in the Ottoman capital:

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Asp, draft dated 26 March 1793, F 812 b, UUL.

The close knowledge I have gained of Bergstedt's character has made me think that there is barely anyone available more suitable as Minister at this place. His extraordinary insights and experience, coupled with the kind of linguistic skills he already has, will serve to let him easily know the land, and are especially significant reasons for his suitability, in addition to his sharp-wittedness and clear mind, along with stiffness in character, qualities that are highly necessary here, and I also believe his integrity is infallible, and he is not a spendthrift.⁴⁰

The testimonial of Bergstedt's character is quite different to the one about Åkerblad. Asp's judgment exhorted the Swedish government to promote Bergstedt, to the high position of minister. His character traits were deemed of sufficient mettle to deal with the intricacies of the situation in Constantinople. Asp also underlined the importance of keeping the promotion of Bergstedt strictly secret; the rivalries at the mission were such that any news of appointments could be detrimental:

I am not concealing that I have mentioned this proposal to him, and that I intended in one way or another to promote his case. Should this be considered in high quarters, I still believe he should go home first, both to communicate the information he has about this place and the Levant in general, and to receive the necessary instructions orally, in this case I think the intention [to promote Bergstedt] should be kept completely secret.

Bergstedt's earlier list of the careers of his colleagues who had served in Paris is also understandable in the light of Asp's support. Bergstedt was made to believe that he had a real possibility of rising to envoy. Åkerblad never nurtured such aspirations. Ironically, the highest post Åkerblad would ever attain in foreign service was that of *chargé d'affaires* in Paris, which was also the highest position Bergstedt ever reached, first in Paris and then in London during the early 1790s.

Asp's repeated request that Åkerblad should be sent home was eventually granted by the Stockholm authorities. A convenient opportunity presented itself when Selim III wanted to express congratulations on the late Gustav III's son's accession to the throne. It was the custom that such high-level correspondence was carried by a diplomat and not just by a courier or in the mail.

Åkerblad left Constantinople in the company of the Dutch ambassador Baron Frederik Gysbert van Dedem van de Gelder and his party on 5 September 1793. Travelling in a larger group like this increased the chances of

⁴⁰ Asp to Rosenhane, 24 December 1794, Constantinople, draft, F 812 d, UUL.

a safe journey. Dedem's son, born in 1774, gave an interesting description of the voyage, detailing how the country had been ravaged by the recent wars. Dedem *fil's* already knew Åkerblad as they had visited the Troad together. He described him as a good travelling companion with the formula so often used about Åkerblad: "a very amiable man and exceptionally versed in the oriental languages."⁴¹

The group passed through Andrinopoli (Edirne), Philippopoli (Plovdiv) and Sofia. The roads were in bad repair. Dedem is formulaic in his description of the landscape: "The traces of despotism are visible everywhere, of slavery, of ignorance and the ravages due to civil and foreign wars, or by the flooding of rivers, by fire and upheavals of nature, and as in most places nobody has even dreamt about repairing them, the result is thousands of difficulties on the roads." The language used is similar to Björnståhl's almost apocalyptic view of Ottoman lands; nevertheless Dedem was often positive about Ottoman learning and culture: "One has in general in Christian countries very incorrect ideas on the Turks."

It was impossible to find new horses; the company had to make do with the same mounts from Constantinople to Belgrade, which rather slowed the journey down. The food was not excellent but three German merchants who joined the travellers had taught the French cook to make use of land turtles, and the Germans "collected all that could be found, which was a real resource."

Dedem complained about the guards that were assigned to them; as they were paid by the daily allowance called *tain* they had little incentive to increase the speed of the journey "and they often even made us do detours through the woods and deserted villages on the pretext that the road was infested with brigands." Carsten Niebuhr, on his way back from Arabia and India a few decades earlier got stuck in quarantine on the border between the Ottoman Empire and Austria. His travel companions could continue because they had not visited plague-stricken areas. When Niebuhr caught up with his companions he found only their dead bodies. They had been murdered by robbers.⁴² Reports of unsafe travel conditions are difficult to corroborate. Åkerblad, who had recently travelled to

⁴¹ For this and the following quotations, Dedem, *Un général hollandais*, 82–84, on learning etc. 53ff.

⁴² Thorkild Hansen, *Arabia Felix: The Danish Expedition of 1761–1767* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 350–51.

Jerusalem, paid for guards. Niebuhr's companions had, however, been murdered in 'Christian' lands: lack of safety was not an Ottoman prerogative.

Åkerblad's company was well-received by all the Ottoman officials with whom they came into contact along the way. Around Belgrade they saw the lines that had been used by the Austrians during the siege in 1789; the city had returned to the Ottomans in the peace of Sistova (Svishtov) in 1791. The town was still full of scars from the bombardment. The company had to spend only ten days in quarantine at Zemlin, today's Zemun on the outskirts of Belgrade, then the border between Austria and the Ottoman Empire. There was no great plague outbreak in the Empire at this moment and the court in Vienna had seen to it that the Dutch ambassador should be treated well at the border. The quarantine experience was not too bad; rather, it was a well-needed occasion for rest after a tiring trip. The company split up and Åkerblad continued through Vienna and Germany to Sweden.

Åkerblad was back in Stockholm by 1 December 1793.⁴³ He was not only bringing official correspondence from Selim III but also voluminous papers documenting the conflict between Heidenstam and the second man at the legation, the former dragoman Mouradgæa d'Ohsson. The conflict at the Swedish legation had gone seriously sour and Asp had tried to mediate. Both Heidenstam and Mouradgæa had printed pamphlets, a sign of the alacrity of the issue. The conflict involved money, honour and diplomatic privileges, a whole range of issues shedding light on the situation of diplomatic affairs in Constantinople. It is obvious from the reactions of the Stockholm superiors that they regarded the affair as exaggerated and useless; they were more than irritated.⁴⁴

The situation in Sweden was very different from what it had been in late 1792 when Åkerblad had written to Swartz. Censorship had been re-established and any opening towards substantial political change, if there had ever been one, was closed. There are several interpretations of the reasoning behind passing the Freedom of the Press act immediately after the king's death. One explanation is that the new regency government needed support against the restoration faction and the supporters of the dead king. It therefore released the flow of public opinion, trusting that it would support the new government, if only for being less autocratic than

⁴³ Date of arrival with Åkerblad's name as courier on Asp's dispatch, 3 September 1793, Bujukdere, Turcica 80, SNA.

⁴⁴ Rikskanslern Fredrik Sparres ämbetsjournal, 20 July 1795, fol. 47v, F 653 b, UUL.

the previous one. When the intentions of the regency were fully understood—i.e., that no real political change was on the agenda—this public support was quickly exhausted and the government set the thumbscrews again.

Åkerblad maintained his contacts in the Swedish government and was on good personal terms with the leader, Reuterholm, who was mockingly called 'storveziren' (the grand vizier).⁴⁵ He had great influence on the regent Duke Karl, as well as on the young king. That a Turkish term was used to mock Reuterholm with reveals both familiarity with and prejudices about Ottoman statecraft.

Åkerblad lacked an official position while he was in Stockholm and so he pursued his scholarly interests, as the correspondence with the Rostock scholar Oluf Gerhard Tychsen testifies. Tychsen was professor of oriental languages at the university of Rostock in northern Germany; the town was still, at that time, a Swedish possession.⁴⁶

In March 1794 several parties tried to influence him to accept to return to Constantinople. Baron Shering Rosenhane, who was the Chancery Councillor in charge of running the practicalities of the foreign service, tried to convince Åkerblad to acquiesce, but Åkerblad refused.⁴⁷ In May 1795 Åkerblad finally gave in. He wrote to the Chancellor of the Kingdom [Rikskansler] Fredrik Sparre. He started by making excuses for having rejected the posting to Turkey and stated his acceptance:

It is almost three months, as Your Excellency made me the honour to point out—since I find myself *on the pavement*, and I have regretted not preferring the high way ... Would Your Excellency deign to excuse my fecklessness. If Your Excellency would deign to send me to Constantinople, or wherever, I will dedicate myself to always follow Your orders with a zeal that will make me worthy of Your high protection.⁴⁸

Åkerblad had done what he could to avoid being sent to Turkey. He was then probably made to understand that if he did not accept the posting, his service in the state was over. An interrupted salary and the harsh words of the Chancellor of the Kingdom—the message could not

⁴⁵ Reuterholm is a debated personality in Swedish historiography; recent contributions have tended to see him in a less critical light. SBL (2000); Erik Lönnroth, "Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm. Minnesteckning," *Svenska Akademiens handlingar* 30 (2001).

⁴⁶ JDÅ to Tychsen, 26 June 1795, Stockholm, MS Orient 284, Rostock University Library. In the same collection Tychsen's draft answer, Rostock 7 July 1795.

⁴⁷ Rosenhane to Asp, 11 March 1794, copy, F 812 d, UUL.

⁴⁸ JDÅ to Fredrik Sparre, 16 May 1795, Stockholm, Autografsamlingen, Fredrik Sparres samling, Ericssbergarsarkivet, SNA.

be misunderstood. Åkerblad was forced to obey or lose any chance of advancement or employment; his economical position was—as usual—almost desperate. A couple of months later he again acknowledged his surrender in a letter to Reuterholm: “my situation is that of the recruit that has wasted his enlistment premium and now only sees in front of him his long capitulation.”⁴⁹ Before leaving Sparre promised him that he would retain the salary of legation secretary when he returned to Sweden.

⁴⁹ JDÅ to Reuterholm, 2 November 1795, Marseille, Reuterholmska samlingen, E-5146, SNA.

CHAPTER TEN

“A DANGEROUS MAN OF ENLIGHTENMENT”

Åkerblad managed to get permission to go to Paris on his way to Turkey. He left in early August 1795 equipped with a courier passport. On his way from Stockholm he visited Åkerö, the estate of Fredrik Sparre to whom he had sworn obedience.

When he reached Hamburg he wrote to Rosenhane explaining why he had been forced to take a detour via Holland. The situation at the French-German border was uncertain and armies were marching in preparation for war. Except for the usual complaints about money—he had been ordered to proceed swiftly which made the voyage even more expensive—he blamed his “cruel star” for sending him a third time to Constantinople. That he rented his own carriage because he had no time to wait for the postal one indicates that he had urgent correspondence with him to bring to Paris, something that is also implied by Sparre.¹

On his arrival in Paris Åkerblad wrote to Reuterholm: “Arrived in Paris in one of the most exceptional epochs of Revolution. I had fervently wanted to stay here some time, but . . . I will as soon as possible leave charming Paris to proceed to Constantinople where my unpropitious destiny leads me.”² The letters he sent to Reuterholm were a mix of political reportage and petition. As usual his main grievance was the insufficient means for the trip. The wars were making travelling more expensive and he also worried whether his passport with the destination Constantinople written in it would cause him trouble if he tried to pass through Hanoverian or Austrian war headquarters. This was another reason for making the trip through France and then by sea instead of travelling overland.

The political commentary in the letters was adapted to each receiver to the extent that we are led to doubt Åkerblad’s sincerity. Reuterholm had been in Paris during the outbreak of the revolution and had initially seen it as a salutary attack on despotism. He had witnessed upsetting events in October 1789; he had run into a tavern to get a shot of wine after seeing

¹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 12 August 1795, Hamburg, Turcica 83, SNA; Rikskanslern Fredrik Sparres ämbetsjournal, 1795, F 653 b, UUL.

² JDÅ to Reuterholm, Paris 15 September 1795, Turcica 83, SNA.

a procession of women brandishing severed heads on spikes.³ Once he himself was invested with power, his ideas on despotism changed. Reuterholm was travelling in Italy in 1792 when news of the Swedish king's death reached him. He hurried back to Stockholm. While in Rome he had had his portrait painted by Angelica Kauffmann, one of the most fashionable artists in Rome. It is especially interesting because it is not a Grand Tour portrait. It clearly refers to his ambitions in Sweden (Figure 30).

Reuterholm let himself be depicted beside the bust of his father, who had died of the complications of a malady contracted in prison after having opposed Gustav III's *coup d'état* in 1772. The hat on the left is that of the uniform of a councillor of the state, his father's office. Reuterholm bears a Roman toga in reference to his role as speaker for the noble estate at the Swedish parliaments of 1786 and 1789. The dates of the parliaments are noted on the paper in his hand.

Åkerblad's descriptions in his letters to Reuterholm highlight the differences between the situations in various places in France and its satellite states. He wrote a long letter about his impressions, hoping to be able to present information that "Your Excellency's penetrating gaze has not yet discovered or foreseen":

With the best will in the world to head straight for Paris, I was nevertheless forced to take a detour over Holland, because the area around the Rhine where the French army was preparing its crossing was inaccessible to travellers.—I only spent a few days in this country which has lost a great part of its real freedom, and in its place it has been filled with freedom trees, dearly paid for in truth and now hateful, even for those who raised them.—Flanders, which I quickly passed through, may possibly with time gain more by its so-called received freedom, but the wounds that it has caused remain open.⁴

This was Åkerblad's first visit to Holland. He observed the changes brought about by the French, and he did not judge them to be improvements. He implied that Holland had enjoyed a great deal of freedom until the French invasion of 1795 put an end to it. The 'freedom trees' he mocked were symbols of the revolution, a pole or in some cases a real tree symbolising the new freedoms. One such pole was raised in Amsterdam in March 1795 to

³ Reuterholm's diary, 10 October 1789, *Resejournaler 1789–1792*, vol. 22, Reuterholms-Ådelgrens samling, SNA.

⁴ This and the following quotations: JDÅ to Reuterholm, 2 November 1795, Marseille, Reuterholmska samlingen, E-5146, SNA.



Figure 30. Gustaf Adolf Reuterholm by Angelica Kauffman. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

celebrate the alliance between France and its satellite state, the Batavian Republic. Åkerblad continued to Paris:

I came to Paris at a time when revolution was expected at every moment, a situation everyone judged according their own insights and wishes. It was nevertheless not difficult to foresee that whichever party had the camp at Marly on its side would remain victorious in the case of an uprising, which also happened.—I did not have time to await the eruption but left Paris a few days before the last revolution, after a sojourn of 3 weeks, which I dare to hope Your Excellency does not find too long.

When Åkerblad wrote to Olof Swartz from Constantinople in December 1792 he remarked that work on the constitution had stopped. This time he witnessed the plebiscite in Paris on the new Constitution of year III that came into effect at the end of September. Many of Åkerblad's friends and scholarly colleagues had left Paris. Once again Åkerblad missed what has become known as one of the crucial moments in the years of French political upheaval. In 1789 he had left Paris a couple of months before the July events, now he left a few days before the outcome of the insurrection against the Convention on 6 October. The Convention was soon abolished and the Directory established. The instability of the situation was obvious to everyone.

Åkerblad kept abreast of events during his travels southwards through France. The situation in France was not what he had expected. His knowledge of rural conditions had been transmitted by German sources because news from revolutionary France was censored in Sweden. German papers were of course critical of French events:

I came to France through Valenciennes, which had suffered a lot during the siege of '93 and I thought, after what I had read in so many German journals, that I now was entering a country plunged into misery, emptied of its people and owing to that laid to waste and untilled. It is nevertheless altogether the opposite, and I have the honour of assuring Your Excellency that from Valenciennes to Marseille I have found the land splendidly cultivated, at least as far as agriculture is concerned, the division of the formerly immense estates has probably contributed not a little to this. If the mass of France's inhabitants at present has gained any advantage through this I do not dare to judge. The new small leaseholders, that already have become rich, treat their poor brothers with the same hardness as the former estate owners, about which so many complained a lot. These small despots have in many places agreed not to sell anything if not paid in gold, and the poor multitude that only owns assignats suffer misery while their merciless oppressors live in abundance produced by the richest of harvests. All the same one now sees fewer beggars than before, both in the countryside and in the cities;

I am afraid that this hardly proves any real prosperity but rather shows the number of men the enormous armies have engulfed.

Typically, Åkerblad wonders whether the poor had gained anything or if power and money had simply been transferred from the nobility to a new group of exploiters. Åkerblad himself lost considerable amounts of money when he tried to exchange *assignats*, the new revolutionary paper money that was hit by hyper-inflation in various reprises. Obtaining money when travelling involved high commissions and bad exchange rates; inflation often hit travellers especially hard.

Even after having travelled extensively in Muslim lands, something he did not let Reuterholm forget, the effects of the revolution on Christian worship astonished him:

What astonishes a traveller, even one used to non-Christian countries, is that all sorts of public worship have been completely erased in such short time. Almost all churches are converted into barns, magazines or stables; all small chapels along the roads have been demolished or at least deprived of their saints, no bells are heard, no single being that resembles a priest or a monk is met. And it is none the less only five years ago since I saw Catholicism in France in its full splendour!—If one had only removed the superfluous; but to destroy all the monuments in the churches, to overthrow all the educational institutions in the Monasteries before something better could be presented, to persecute the most virtuous, the most enlightened people just because they were members of an order—all this can never be excused, except by barbarians who are so fuelled by their rage as to once propose to burn down all libraries.

Åkerblad's dismay at the destruction of monuments and culture was real. The last stage in the destructive frenzy was the burning of libraries, an abomination worse than any other. The receiver of the letter, Reuterholm, was a protestant, a freemason and, according to some, a kind of mystic. Attacks on religion, even if they were against the much abhorred Catholicism, were also an attack on authority. Tellingly, Åkerblad did not write about the abolition of nobility. He knew that Reuterholm never forgot his noble origins and his pride of birth.

The effects of the Terror and civil unrest were more visible in the south than in Paris:

From Paris I went over Dijon and Chalon to Lyon—It is there you see the abomination of the devastation! It was not enough that thousands of its inhabitants were murdered in droves, but a comité de démolition was established, that at high costs tore down and destroyed almost a third of what in bygone days had been such a beautiful city. When one hears stories of cruelties committed and see the devastation that reigns everywhere, one cannot

hinder oneself from exclaiming: oh freedom! What crimes have not been committed in your name! It is here that I would like to see the ignorant and the malevolent, those that want to see the example of France followed in their fatherland—to be convinced of their folly and among the destruction brought about by unbridled freedom learn to appreciate their own under-rated happiness.—Avignon had recently seen new scenes of cruelty in its bosom when I passed. The city was still in state of siege; discontent and misery now prevail in this France's Paradise. Marseille has suffered many misfortunes but is now recovering. The peace with Spain has already contributed to the return of commerce and affluence.

Åkerblad had visited Lyon and Avignon on his way from Marseille to Paris when he returned to Sweden in 1789. Now he compared the state of the cities. He ended up spending more than a month in Marseille and met his acquaintances from 1789, at least those who had remained in the city. Raynal, whom Åkerblad had met there in 1789, had been highly critical of the violence of the revolution and now lived in the countryside close to Paris. The revolution and especially the Terror had suspended the antiquarian networks in southern France. The academies and other *ancien régime* institutions had been suppressed.

After the long report on the situation in France, Åkerblad returned to his quest for better conditions. The letter ends with a nod to Reuterholm's wide-ranging literary interests. Åkerblad introduced an Italian quotation from Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* to hammer in his point. Åkerblad compared his own relationship with Sweden to Olindo and his unrequited love for Sophronia: "I have until now resembled Olindo in Tasso that *Brama assai, poco spera, nulla chiede* and I have like him hitherto *o non visto, o mal visto, o mal gradito* but I age in my subaltern guise and I am disheartened by my unavailing endeavours."⁵ Åkerblad elided Tasso's poem but counted on Reuterholm being familiar with it. It is not unlikely that they had discussed Italian literature; Reuterholm had been twice to Italy.

One could question the strength of Åkerblad's love for Sweden but his choice of Tasso for Reuterholm was not out of place. Reuterholm regarded himself as a writer and nurtured artistic ambitions. Tasso's exaltation of the crusaders was also fitting; after the French Revolution the Christian faith was attacked not only from outside but also from within Europe.

⁵ JDÅ to Reuterholm, 2 November 1795 Marseille, Reuterholmska samlingen, E-5146, SNA.

Åkerblad's vision of France had certainly changed, but we cannot rely on the letter to Reuterholm as proof of this change. As the earlier letter to Swartz indicates he was already questioning the French factional conflicts in 1792 and probably viewed the Terror with dismay. That his own political opinions had been made known in diplomatic circles was evident. He wrote to Stockholm that he was considered a "dangerous man of the Enlightenment" even before his arrival in Constantinople:

I was told at my arrival that appointment... was not appreciated as I was considered a dangerous man of the Enlightenment who knew country, people and circumstances, and furthermore was stubborn enough not to act against my own convictions. I tried in the beginning to defuse all these suspicions of me; I acted with the utmost discretion that I thought masterly; but when I found that I was still being plotted against, I took my stand.⁶

He was thus considered a 'man of the Enlightenment,' but where and how? In Constantinople, in Sweden, or was the concept being applied in general terms to describe scepticism towards monarchies and religion? Swedish historiography has recently been engaged in discussions on the degree to which the European Enlightenment ever touched Sweden.⁷ Some historians even claim that the concept of Enlightenment is of little consequence in Sweden, to the extent that it did not really exist as a phenomenon there in the eighteenth-century. This is an exaggeration. However, if one defines the Enlightenment as something close to the paradigmatic French definition, little of it could be observed in Sweden. As always in the secular debate on the Enlightenment it is the definition of the movement which is crucial. A Swedish Enlightenment would more likely be defined as a pro-saic movement of societal betterment, often within the realm of official religion and political structures. The French *philosophes* were read in Sweden and influenced the debate there, especially from the 1780s onwards, but little evidence of the firebrand version of the Enlightenment can be found in Sweden.

Åkerblad's benefactor Gjörwell is an example of a Swedish 'man of Enlightenment' and he is often mentioned in the debate. Gjörwell was without doubt one of the seminal actors spreading foreign ideas. One of his many botched projects was the publication of a Swedish encyclopaedia

⁶ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 25 February 1797, Constantinople, G 231 h, UUL.

⁷ Overviews of the debate in e.g.: Tore Frängsmyr, *Sökandet efter upplysningen: Perspektiv på svenskt 1700-tal*, 2nd ed. (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 2005), French trans. of 1st ed., (Bordeaux, 1999); Ronny Ambjörnsson, Pär Eliasson, and Björn Olsson, eds., *Upplysningen i periferin* (Umeå: University of Umeå, 1998).

modelled on the French. But Gjörrwell was deeply religious and supported the monarchy, and he was always aware of which direction the political winds were blowing.

The quotation illustrates Åkerblad's own definition of what it means to be a 'dangerous man of the Enlightenment.' The point was not only to have opinions and convictions. Many of his colleagues nurtured liberal or even radical ideas. But it was one thing to have opinions, it was quite another to stand up to superiors and to stick to one's ideas! Åkerblad also stressed the importance of his knowledge of local conditions, which made his lack of pliancy even more irritating to his new chief in Constantinople. Here the connection between character and ideas comes into play. Was his definition self-congratulatory, as much as to say 'only I do not succumb to the pressure'? What is clear is that whether stated or only inferred, personal political opinions did play an important role when appointing officials and subsequently influenced their possibilities to execute their tasks. Åkerblad's foreign sojourns and broad circle of contacts were instrumental in forming his political ideas.

Åkerblad waited in Marseille for more than a month but could not find a ship bound for Turkey. The English navy was blockading Genoa and he decided to try his luck at Livorno. There he had to wait another month and the weather deteriorated as winter approached. Eventually he found a ship heading to Smyrna, where he arrived on 14 January 1796 after a difficult voyage. He had now spent 6 months travelling from Stockholm to Turkey. He finally arrived in Constantinople on 7 February 1796 after a ten-day trip on horseback.⁸

The Man from Ararat: Mouradgea d'Ohsson

The situation in Constantinople had again changed since Åkerblad's departure in 1793. Asp had originally been eager to get Åkerblad back to Turkey but then Asp himself had been recalled and was subsequently appointed to London. The new Swedish minister in Constantinople, Mouradgea d'Ohsson, had been appointed in the summer of 1795.

Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson (1740–1807) had already worked at the Swedish mission before his appointment. He came from an Armenian

⁸ JDÅ to Rosenhane 10 February 1796, G 231 h, UUL; JDÅ to Mouradgea d'Ohsson, 15 January 1796, Smyrna, Avg. och ank. handlingar 1796, vol. 85, Beskick. Konst. Arkiv, Arninge, SNA; Vat. lat., fol. 29r.



Figure 31. Mouradgea let himself be painted by the most fashionable court painter in Stockholm, Lorens Pasch the younger, probably during a visit to Stockholm in 1790. He is portrayed wearing the so-called 'svenska dräkten,' the 'Swedish national costume.' It was a creation of Gustav III's and was meant to become standard official dress. It was not a success but Mouradgea's desire to be painted wearing it says something about his aspirations. Note that Gustav III and his retinue wear the same dress during his visit to the Vatican (Pl. 1). Mouradgea also bears the Order of the Vasa which the king had instituted in 1772. Private collection. Photo Sture Theolin.

Catholic family; his father had worked as dragoman at the Swedish consulate in Smyrna. He was first employed at the Swedish mission in Constantinople in 1763 and had had several positions, including that of *chargé d'affaires* from 1782–83, before being nominated as minister in July 1795. He had been ennobled by the Swedish king in 1780 when he had taken the Swedish-sounding name of d'Ohsson (Figure 31).

Mouradgea gained notoriety for his great book on the Ottoman Empire's culture and history: *Tableau général de l'Empire ottoman...*, which was

well-received and widely discussed in Europe.⁹ Although this is one of the most important sources for Ottoman history during this period no biography of Mouradgea himself has yet been written. The *Tableau's* subject is related to what European authors wrote about Turkey. Mouradgea tried to counter much of what he saw as biased and untrue information on the Empire and its history. Mouradgea exhibited many traits that endear him to contemporary scholars interested in questions of identity and nationality.¹⁰ It is not the intention here to belittle him in relation to Åkerblad. The exposition below only deals with a single episode of their respective lives and arguably one more formative for Åkerblad than for Mouradgea.

The events which led to Mouradgea's appointment as minister are still not completely clear. The main motivation seems to have been the Swedish government's quest for subsidies from the Ottoman state. Swedish finances were in a catastrophic state and it was hoped in Stockholm that money could be wrangled from Constantinople by entering into another treaty with the Turks and promising to keep the Russia at bay. This was somewhat optimistic given that Sweden had broken its last treaty with the Porte. The previous Swedish ministers, Heidenstam and Asp, had found it impossible to obtain further subsidies from the Porte. Asp thought that Mouradgea was the only person who might succeed.

Mouradgea did eventually manage to extract some money on behalf of the Swedish government. More important from an international perspective was that he was also an advisor to Selim III on both civil and military reform. Sweden had sent naval officers to support the Turkish navy with both shipbuilding expertise and training of personnel. Dry-docks and ships were built in Constantinople and Rhodes with Swedish assistance. Asp and Åkerblad had had trouble with these matters during the early 1790s and the problems continued. Not surprisingly, managing the military assistance was a tricky issue.¹¹

⁹ Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson, *Tableau général de l'Empire ottoman...*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1787–1820). Two volumes were published by Mouradgea himself, 1787 and 1790, the third volume was brought out by his son Constantine in 1820.

¹⁰ Sture Theolin, ed., *The Torch of the Empire: Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson and the Tableau général of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık Ticaret ve Sanayi A.Ş., 2002).

¹¹ Thomasson, *Sabre and Koran*; Tuncay Zorlu, *Innovation and Empire in Turkey: Selim III and the Modernization of the Ottoman Navy* (London: Tauris, 2008), 90–93; T. J. Arne, *Svenskarna och Österlandet* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1952), 92–103.

The 1790s was a dramatic decade for Constantinople in many respects; the French Revolution took its toll on Ottoman politics. Historically France had been the Ottoman Empire's great ally, but, like many countries, the Porte took its time to recognize the French republic. Friendship with France was not appreciated in Constantinople after the French invasion of Egypt in 1798.

Mouradgea sent frequent dispatches to Stockholm throughout his appointment as head of mission. The Swedish foreign service was presumably among the most well informed on what was happening in Constantinople and on how European powers, including Russia, fought for influence at the Porte. The correspondence offers rich insights into the machinations of Constantinople diplomacy by an insider well-acquainted with the functions of the Ottoman state.¹² However, Mouradgea's dispatches were not acted upon in Stockholm to any great extent.

Åkerblad was probably instructed to report on Mouradgea. Åkerblad's correspondence was mostly directed to Rosenhane, who was the head of the central office of the foreign service, the Royal Cabinet for Foreign Correspondence [Kabinettet för utrikes brevväxlingen]. Åkerblad wrote to him both in his official capacity as Chancery Councillor and as a private person. This is reflected in the survival of the letters; some are conserved in the National Archives, some in Rosenhane's private papers. On a few occasions we have two letters from Åkerblad to Rosenhane dated the same day. They are addressed to the private and official Rosenhane respectively. The mail from Constantinople normally left twice a month and letters from Constantinople to Stockholm took an average of 63 days during this period.¹³

Åkerblad's first letter to Rosenhane reported that he had been well received by Mouradgea. In the same letter he wrote with foresight: "Everything, everything discourages me and from hereafter I will constantly tire my protectors, my benefactors with prayers to be released from here."¹⁴ The ensuing correspondence did exhaust his superiors in Stockholm.

Soon Åkerblad wrote an official letter to Rosenhane, and due to his patriotic feelings, he was compelled to state that there was little hope of

¹² A selection of Mouradgea's dispatches to Stockholm and other diplomatic correspondence has recently been published. The ed. has chosen to only publish the correspondence he judges to pertain to the 'Eastern Question.' Veniamin Ciobanu, ed., *Europe and the Porte: New Documents on the Eastern Question*, 7 vols. (Iași: various publishers, 2001–9).

¹³ Folke Ludwigs, "Mouradgea's Last Years," in Theolin, *Torch of the Empire*, 140.

¹⁴ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 February 1796, G 231 h, UUL.

further subsidies from the Turks, and that no support from the Ottoman state should be expected in relation to Swedish-Russian affairs.¹⁵ These were the two most important issues Mouradgea had been instructed to address. While criticising Mouradgea, Åkerblad repeated his old Constantinople laments: "Oh! My most gracious Sir, I already see it [the grave] opened, I wander towards it with hasty steps and what is worst, accompanied by grief, remorse and the Plague."¹⁶ It appears that Åkerblad was planning to escape the thorny situation by going travelling; this is at least what can be read into a passport issued by the Porte in May 1796 that granted travel to Salonica and the islands of the archipelago (Figure 32).

In a private letter to Rosenhane, dated the same day as the previous one, graver issues were dealt with. Åkerblad focused on Mouradgea's background, caustically calling him "the man from Ararat."¹⁷ Åkerblad was building a case. Since Mouradgea was not Swedish his loyalty towards Sweden was questionable. Åkerblad also accused Mouradgea of greed. As a matter of fact Mouradgea was running an extensive merchant business, although it remains unclear how successful it was during these turbulent years.¹⁸

In September Åkerblad reported to the authorities in Stockholm that Mouradgea was finally to be received by the Porte and accredited as minister.¹⁹ Usually a new minister was granted an audience within a few weeks of arrival in Constantinople. In Mouradgea's case eight months had passed and his audience had still not been scheduled. Åkerblad said that Mouradgea had avoided telling his Stockholm superiors about the problems, and that the city was teeming with gossip about Mouradgea's difficulties in attaining an audience. According to Åkerblad the major problem was that Mouradgea was an Ottoman subject. Furthermore, Mouradgea's friend Ebu Ratib Bekir Effendi (Reis Effendi), the Ottoman foreign minister, had recently been exiled. Åkerblad added that he had no bad intentions in sending this information to Stockholm and that his only aspiration was to get away from the city. Implicitly this suggested he wanted neither to stay nor to take Mouradgea's position or be promoted to *chargé d'affaires* in lieu of a new envoy.

¹⁵ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 March 1796, Constantinople, Turcica 85, SNA.

¹⁶ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 9 April 1796, Constantinople, Turcica 85, SNA.

¹⁷ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 9 April 1796, Kanslitjänstemännens konc. och mottagna skrivelser, Gustaf IV Adolfs tid, till Schering Rosenhane, SNA.

¹⁸ Carter V. Findley, "Writer and Subject, Self and Other: Mouradgea d'Ohsson and his Tableau Général de l'Empire Othoman" in Theolin, *Torch of the Empire*, 25–26.

¹⁹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 September, Bujukdere, Turcica 85, SNA.

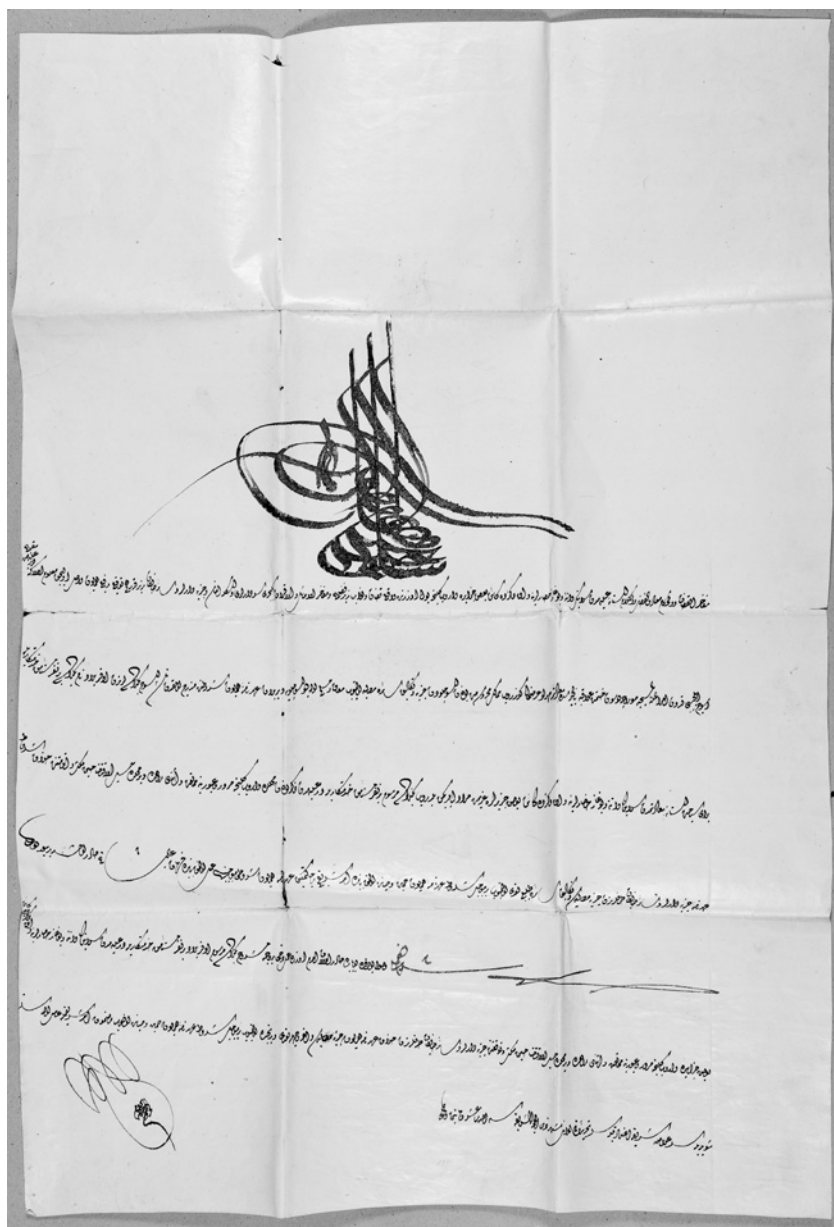


Figure 32. Åkerblad's 1796 passport. MS Dorn 543/50, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg.

The theme of loyalty in connection to nationality is complex. Whatever Mouradgea's intentions and loyalties were, the world around him could not disregard the implications of his being an Ottoman subject and serving another nation's interests. Ebu Bekir Ratib had earlier written to his Constantinople superiors from the embassy in Vienna underlining how loyal Mouradgea had been to the Ottoman state: "God knows, he is so zealous for the Sublime State that if I say [he is] more so than we [are], I would not be speaking falsely." Ratib also stressed that Mouradgea's *Tableau general* was positive towards the Porte: "I have had the parts of this history that praise the Sublime State translated by my translator and thus amply proved that he is a loyal and zealous servant of the Sublime State."²⁰

However, the mistrust between Åkerblad and Mouradgea increased and in a dispatch of 24 September Åkerblad told Rosenhane how Mouradgea had removed documents from the legation archive. Mouradgea's Armenian origins and status as an Ottoman subject was again used by Åkerblad to question the minister's loyalty to Sweden: "M. is Armenian; he serves Sweden only to gain advantages, a country which he surely never aims to go to and for which he probably has none of the feelings I presume every Swede has."²¹ Åkerblad believed that there was a possibility that Mouradgea was soon to be replaced. When Åkerblad's dispatch arrived in Stockholm Rosenhane wrote a comment in the margin of Åkerblad's original. Rosenhane noted that the changes in the mission that Åkerblad interpreted as indicating that Mouradgea was to be replaced referred to changes in Paris, not in Constantinople. Åkerblad's mistaken belief was based on a clerical error made in Stockholm; the word Paris had been left out in the dispatch sent to Constantinople. Mouradgea would later accuse Åkerblad of spreading false rumours about his removal.

A further irony of the whole affair was that Åkerblad himself would be accused of not being Swedish enough. In Rome rumours circulated that he was criticizing his 'fatherland' and thus not fit to work for Sweden. These were similar accusations to those he had made against Mouradgea.

The following month Åkerblad blamed Mouradgea for not doing enough to free Swedish sailors enslaved in the Ottoman navy.²² On the same day

²⁰ Undated dispatch from Ratib, in Carter V. Findley, "Ebu Bekir Ratib's Vienna Embassy Narrative: Discovering Austria or Propagandizing for Reform in Istanbul?," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 85 (1995): 48.

²¹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 24 September 1796, Turcica 85, SNA.

²² JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 November 1796, Turcica 85, SNA.

Mouradgea wrote a *lettre confidentielle* to Rosenhane which began: "I do not know how to explain the continuous caprices of A." He then listed Åkerblad's faults and his propensity to spread false rumours.²³ In Åkerblad's next private letter to Rosenhane he described Mouradgea's performance at the long-awaited audience that he was finally granted:

I cannot say more this time than that the great man on this occasion forgot in haste all his pride, all his haughtiness and only remembered his being an Armenian, which a Vizier can slay with a look; and it is not strange that he trembled, with a broken voice and slavish gestures he only managed to stutter a part of his grand oration.²⁴

Mouradgea then turned to Fredrik Sparre, the Swedish Chancellor, who he and Åkerblad both regarded as the last resort in their supplications:

I am now obliged to speak clearly. Åkerblad has spread the rumor that I was recalled . . . that I had lost all the confidence of the Court, that he had a special Cipher, and that he used it every mail-day. He has intrigued to meet an Ottoman minister who closed the door to him. I have it all Sir, from reliable sources. I have heard it even from the Ottoman Porte itself, who has warned me to be on my guard and to unmask such a foolhardy person. . . . I have reason to believe that he has permitted himself to send false dispatches to Sweden, and that he is the author of everything that has been inserted in various public papers.²⁵

If Mouradgea's accusations were true, they were serious. He continued attacking Åkerblad's character:

It is ambition that makes him act. Also, nothing is more imprudent than his conduct in society. He often makes indiscrete propositions. His arrogant air insults everyone. He goes out at night with torches while all Ministers and even Ambassadors themselves do not use anything but lanterns to light their way. This trait alone characterizes him.

Was Mouradgea speaking in good faith when he stated that Åkerblad had ambitions in Constantinople or was it only an integral part of the smearing of his character? A character who used torches at night and thus acted above his actual station as a lowly secretary? Where was he going anyway at such late hours?

By this point, Stockholm had had enough. Rosenhane criticized Åkerblad, who wrote back excusing himself for having used harsh words whilst

²³ d'Ohsson to Rosenhane, 10 November 1796, Turcica 85, SNA.

²⁴ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 24 December 1796, G 231 h, UUL.

²⁵ d'Ohsson to Sparre, 10 January 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA.

still maintaining that his observations on Mouradgea were well-founded.²⁶ Finally the order for Åkerblad's recall arrived. Both Åkerblad and Mouradgea immediately wrote to Rosenhane to thank him for granting their respective demands.²⁷ On the same day Åkerblad wrote a straightforward private letter to Rosenhane: "My recall finally arrived, and I and my chief have both considered it a victory, each for his side. We both sing *te deum*." He added: "the old man has completely changed his behaviour towards me since the news arrived."²⁸

Having attained his objective and realising that he might have used exaggeration to achieve it, Åkerblad started to express some remorse: "What only troubles me now is the fear that His Majesty's merciful recall for me is maybe a disgrace, and I request most sincerely that you Sir have the charity to honestly tell me what to expect." He begged Rosenhane for continued support so that the promises made to him before leaving for Constantinople would be honoured. He wanted to go to Italy and proposed that he could join a Swedish mission for Naples, adding that he could not fathom that his only future role was to translate a few letters from the Barbary States.

Åkerblad often wrote to Rosenhane, especially in his private letters, *en clair*. Rosenhane told him in unequivocal terms that this was not a good idea. Åkerblad was also told that his criticism of Mouradgea had been excessive; the description of Mouradgea's behaviour during the audience struck Rosenhane as especially offensive. Åkerblad made several attempts to defend himself: "Far from wanting to ridicule his victory in achieving them [the audiences], I have only in confidence related his behaviour . . . all our nationals here and many foreigners witnessed it" and added: "it has never come to my mind to blame Mouradgea's origins, which I have not even mentioned, nor his being Armenian which I have only mentioned as being unlucky for a Swedish Minister."²⁹ Considering Åkerblad's own background he had refrained from criticizing Mouradgea's social origins, that is his humble birth. He continued and compared himself to Socrates: "even if my Apology was as eloquent as Socrates', I would have to empty the poison Chalice if it was destined for me." (Figure 33)

²⁶ Rosenhane to JDÅ, draft, 13 December 1796, Stockholm, Utgående handlingar, koncept, B1B, vol. 159, Kabinettet för utrikes brevväxling, SNA; JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 February 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA.

²⁷ d'Ohsson to Rosenhane, 24 February 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA; JDÅ to Rosenhane, 25 February 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA.

²⁸ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 25 February 1797, Constantinople, G 231 h, UUL.

²⁹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 April 1797, Constantinople, Turcica 86, SNA.

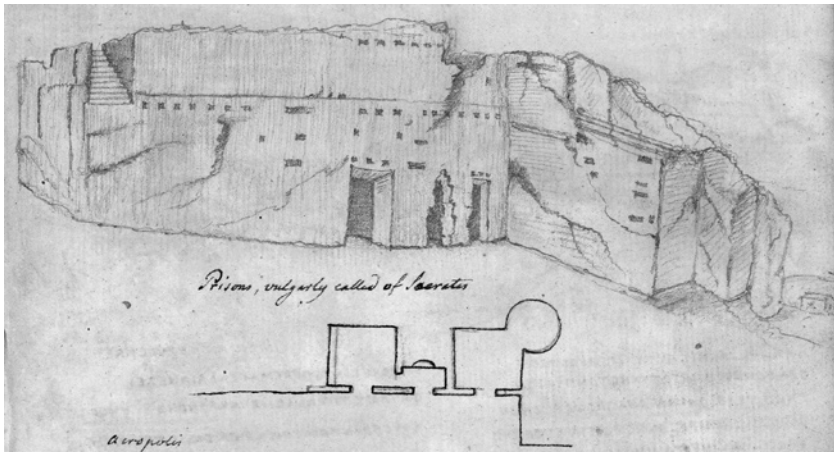


Figure 33. Åkerblad's drawing of the so-called 'Prisons of Socrates' on the Philopappo hill in Athens. A legend claimed that this was where Socrates was held before he finally emptied the poison chalice. Fol. 61r, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.

The passage ends with a submissive admission of guilt:

Mr Baron has reproached me for two errors, having used sarcasm in letters that I considered being of completely private character, and for which I have apologized in one of my missives to Mr Baron, the second that I have not always ciphered my letters, something that Mr Baron quite Christianly assumes has happened because of my ignorance of the custom of opening them in Vienna, but that unfortunately happened because of pure laziness. *Mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!!!*

Åkerblad's attacks on Mouradgea had long ago surpassed any effective strategy for advancement. The outcome of the battle between the two men had been advantageous to neither. Åkerblad was without a position in Sweden's foreign service and Mouradgea, whose reputation had been severely damaged, would have problems until the moment he was recalled by Stockholm.

Åkerblad awaited instructions from Stockholm but failed to receive any answer to his queries. He sent Rosenhane two letters on the same day in which he pointed out what Sparre had promised him: that he was to retain his pay as a pension while he continued his studies.³⁰ Åkerblad

³⁰ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 10 June 1797, letter in the official correspondence: Turcica 86, SNA; letter in the private correspondence: G231 h, UUL.

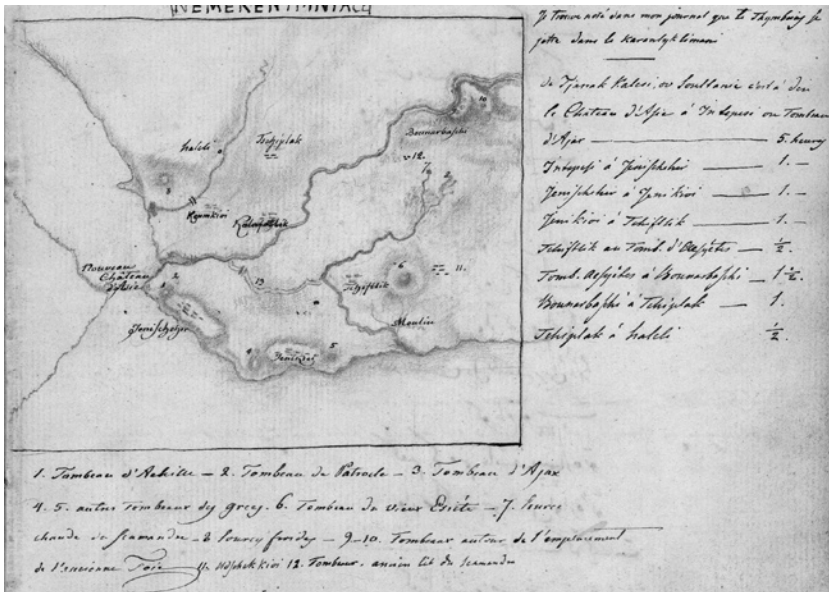


Figure 34. Map of the Trojan area in Åkerblad's notebook. The numbers on the map refer to the descriptions below while the list on the right details the distances (in hours) between the places on the map. Fol. 28r, Vat. lat. 9785. © BAV.

stayed until the arrival of his successor, Nils Gustaf Palin, and finally left Constantinople on 22 June 1797. He never returned.

Criticizing Grave-Robbers

During the previous year in Constantinople Åkerblad had not been able to much advance his studies and being freed from his duties, he immediately set out to repair this. The first thing he did was visit the Trojan plain, where he had last been in 1792.³¹ There was a lively debate as to the whereabouts of Troy's exact location and a range of propositions had been put forward. One of the scholar-artists in Choiseul-Gouffier's company, Jean-Baptiste Lechevalier, had presented new hypotheses, which had been widely discussed. Åkerblad now wanted to see for himself (Figure 34).

³¹ The tour of the summer of 1797 in Vat. lat. fols. 19rf.

The Trojan debate mixed literary reminiscences with actual practical investigations. Åkerblad was motivated in his visit to the Troad in 1792 by his wish “to read Homer at the site he so accurately, so splendidly describes.”³² Callmer and J. M. Cook have described Åkerblad’s contribution to the debate. Åkerblad’s hypothesis that the Roman city Ilion, the successor of Homeric Troy, was to be found at Hisarlık was later proven right. What he did not know was that Homeric Troy itself lay hidden under the Roman remains. The prehistory of the discovery of Troy is well-described. It may be repeated that even if it was Heinrich Schliemann who discovered Troy, several scholars had previously suggested the right location.³³

Åkerblad spent the summer travelling in the Greek archipelago, and visited several islands. He was held up by the *Meltemi*, the strong summer northern wind, at Mykonos for eleven days in July. At Chios he met the rector and several teachers of the famous Greek gymnasium.³⁴ As usual he copied down inscriptions and made lists of regional and dialectal words.

On 9 August Åkerblad arrived in Athens. Going by the inscriptions he copied he thoroughly explored the city and gained access to the Acropolis, now serving as the Turkish fortress of the city. Using Athens as his base Åkerblad made several excursions. Late in August he went to Eleusis and further on to Megara and Thebes.³⁵ He also visited some Albanian villages and came into contact with the Albanian language and—as usual—made some efforts to pick it up. He noted that “in its origin Albanian does not seem to resemble any other language, at least I find no relationship between this language and the others I know.” He appended an Albanian wordlist to this judgment.³⁶ It is not surprising that he could not find any similarities. In the 1850s it was proven that Albanian does belong to the Indo-European language family but its exact relations to other languages are still debated. Åkerblad was likewise interested in the Tsakonian dialect, now believed to be directly derived from pre-classical Greek.

³² JDÅ to Swartz, 24 December 1792, Constantinople, KVA.

³³ Callmer, 190ff.; J. M. Cook, *The Troad: An Archaeological and Topographical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 24, 94, 146f., 164f.; Donald F. Easton, “Troy Before Schliemann,” *Studia Troica* 1 (1991): 111–129.

³⁴ Vat. lat. 9784, fol. 15r.

³⁵ Vat. lat. 9784, fols. 22vf.

³⁶ Vat. lat., fol. 19r. Åkerblad also cited the first Albanian dictionary published in Rome 1635 and a 1716 grammar. Albanian words also in Vat. Lat. 9784, fol. 27r.

He made wordlists and noted the size of villages in the Morea (Peloponnese), where Tsakonian was spoken.³⁷

In Athens he met with Fauvel, with whom he had first become acquainted in Constantinople in 1784. Fauvel was now making a living as a collector of and trader in antiquities. Fauvel served Choiseul-Gouffier and the French ambassador instructed him to do his utmost to procure artefacts: "Take away everything you can, do not neglect to use any means, my dear Fauvel, to loot in Athens and its surroundings, everything which is lootable . . . spare neither the dead nor the living."³⁸ A great many antiquities passed through Fauvel's hands and Åkerblad copied several inscriptions in his collection, amongst them one from a bi-lingual Phoenician-Greek tombstone which he published in Göttingen in 1800.

We can gain idea of what Åkerblad and Fauvel saw in Athens, and how both the city, and the perception of it changed during the latter part of the eighteenth century, by comparing these two images of the Erechtheion on the Athenian Acropolis (Figure 35a, b). Around 50 years separate them. The first is from Stuart and Revett's influential (cited by Åkerblad) *Antiquities of Athens* and the second is from a collection of drawings made by Edward Dodwell in Greece in 1801–6. There were numerous changes over this period. Note how the third caryatid is replaced by a square pillar. It is now in the British Museum. The first image is almost a domestic scene and the caption describes and names many of the persons in the image. The two diggers are investigating the foundations while the two men standing between the caryatids are there for surveillance to ensure that visitors do not remove anything. In the second image the temple has become an isolated part of the Greek 'heritage'.³⁹

During his years in the Ottoman Empire Åkerblad had observed the methods used to dig for antiquities as well as how already-exposed marbles were taken away. Vilhoisson, Åkerblad's travelling companion in the 1780s noted what was happening on the islands and along the coasts in his diary. Both foreigners and locals were guilty of taking 'marbles' in great quantities. These were put to various uses, from adorning houses in Paris, London, Athens or Constantinople to burning for mortar or the making of

³⁷ Vat. lat. 9784, fols. 29rff.

³⁸ Choiseul-Gouffier to Fauvel, 14 February 1789, fols. 163–64, MS FR 22873, BNF; Zambon, *Fauvel. Aux origines*.

³⁹ Bruce Redford, *Dilettanti: The Antic and the Antique in Eighteenth-Century England* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2008), 44–82; Jason M. Kelly, *The Society of Dilettanti: Archaeology and Identity in the British Enlightenment* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2009).



a



b

Figure 35a–b. The top image from James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens* . . . , 4 vols. (London, 1762–1816), 2: ch. 2, pl. 2. The bottom image from Dodwell, *Views in Greece*, pl. 9, South-west view of the Erechtheion. UUL.

cannonballs. British and French collectors are the most well-known perpetrators but Vilhoison also pointed out a significant Russian presence in the 1780s. Russian military and nobles filled their ships with antiquities.⁴⁰

On his way back to Sweden in 1800 Åkerblad passed Gotha where he met Carl Gotthold Lenz. Lenz was in the process of abridging and translating Lechevalier's book on the Troad into German and Åkerblad's observations were added as a long commentary. Lenz dedicated his translation to Åkerblad and eulogized him on several pages as a diligent scholar who trusted his own observations. In his contribution Åkerblad was scathing about Fauvel's methods:

No one has destroyed more grave mounds than the French painter *Fauvel*. He has excavated almost everything in the vicinity of Athens, Marathon and other areas . . . The worst thing about it is that Fauvel has not given us the slightest notice about the remarkable items found in these venerable monuments, and that you do not even know what has become of the objects, which partly have been sent to Choiseul, whose collections have been scattered since his emigration.⁴¹

The main problem for Åkerblad was the lack of documentation during the search for objects.⁴² He recognized that the loss of context severely impaired the quest for further knowledge. The digs resembled grave-robbing more than any modern understanding of archaeology. Digging in Ottoman Greece, and also to a large extent on the Italian peninsula, had mostly served to unearth objects of artistic and thus monetary value. Scandinavian archaeology was influential in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the Swedish state had in 1734 instituted a law that prescribed finders of antiquities to render their finds to the state, but also paid them more than the metal value; what was principally bought was gold and silver objects.⁴³ One could hypothesize that Åkerblad's criticism was also connected to having a greater sensitivity toward this issue born out of a tradition where the state also valued archaeological finds.

⁴⁰ Vilhoison, *De l'Hellade a la Grèce*, 157ff.; Cook, *Troad*, 200–2.

⁴¹ J.-B. Lechevalier, *Reise nach Troas oder Gemählde der Eben von Troja in ihrem gegenwärtigen Zustande vom Bürger Lechevalier*, trans. and adapted by C. G. Lenz (Altenburg und Erfurt, 1800). Åkerblad's "Beylage," 223–43, 232.

⁴² For a detailed discussion on Åkerblad's and other Swedish travellers' views on collecting in Ottoman Greece see my *Justifying and Criticizing Removals*.

⁴³ Ole Klindt-Jensen, *A History of Scandinavian Archaeology* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), ch. 2–3; Evert Baudou, *Den nordiska arkeologin—historia och tolkningar* (Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien, 2004), ch. 3–4.

Another aspect of Åkerblad's critique of Fauvel that makes it especially interesting is the value he puts on the artefacts as being "historical" and not only "artistic." He regarded objects in a wider environment and underlined that their removal affected not only the single monument but also implied a loss of knowledge and context. In a dissertation written in 1811 Åkerblad stressed how important it was to keep the finds from graves together. If the objects are dispersed the possibility of investigating and comparing finds is lost and it becomes impossible to understand the function of objects found buried with the deceased. He exemplified this with the debate on the so-called *patere* made of bronze, often found in Etruscan graves. Whilst many thought these were shallow bowls Åkerblad maintained that they were mirrors. According to Åkerblad this was proven by the fact that they were sometimes—if the finds had not been divided and dispersed—found together with other items such as combs and hairpins that signalled their function. The loss of context and knowledge was even more evident with reference to inscriptions where texts give important information about the places and circumstances where they are found.⁴⁴

Åkerblad made his critical judgement of the practices of the great collectors just as the most famous removal of antiquities was about to occur in Greece. His passage on Fauvel was published in Germany in 1800, the same year that Lord Elgin (Thomas Bruce 1766–1841) began large-scale removals from Athens and other Greek locations. The decades around 1800 spurred ferocious competition between French and British collectors which has sometimes been called a 'war of antiquities.'⁴⁵

There was little general disapproval of the large-scale removals happening in Greece but Åkerblad remained steadfast in his opinion. In his 1811 treatise he referred to Elgin's deeds in Athens: "The grand staircase, which leads there, was discovered some years ago by Lord Aberdeen, a small gain that cannot cancel the memory of all the wrongs, that another Englishman, Lord Elgin, did to the monuments of Athens." Ironically Aberdeen also tried his best to get marbles sent back to Britain, and was duly criticized for this by his cousin Byron.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Åkerblad, *Sopra due laminette*, 22ff.

⁴⁵ Holger Hock, "The British State and the Anglo-French Wars over Antiquities, 1798–1858," *The Historical Journal* 50 (2007): 49–72.

⁴⁶ Åkerblad, *Sopra due laminette*, 9. George Hamilton Gordon, fourth earl of Aberdeen 1784–1860.

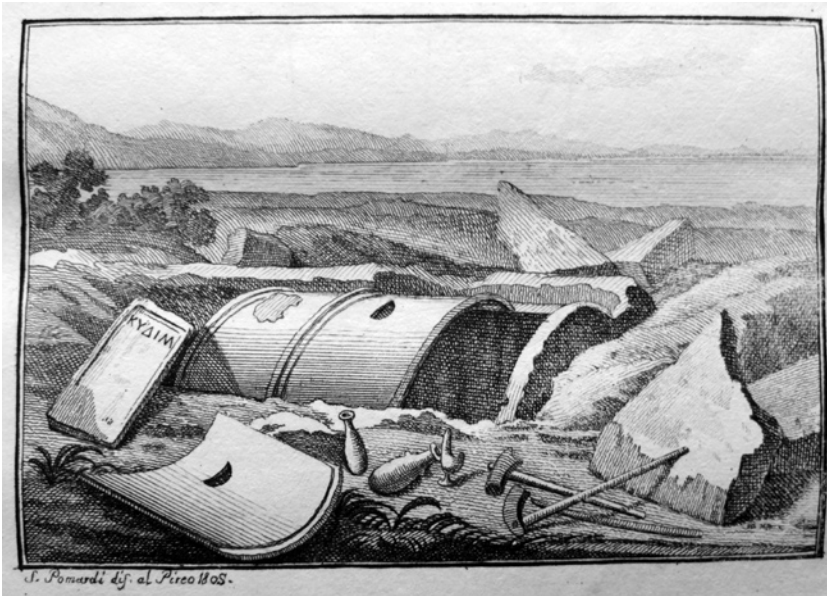


Figure 36. Simone Pomardi. Frontispiece in Åkerblad, *Lamina Piombo*. Photo author.

The engraving Åkerblad used as frontispiece to his dissertation on Greek magical inscriptions is telling in the way it depicts archaeological tools and practices (Figure 36). A hammer and a pick rest by a broken tomb and the finds lie exposed in front of it. The opening of this particular tomb was a summary affair where the brick tiles covering the sepulchral chamber were broken and the contents of the tomb extracted.⁴⁷

Soon condemnation of Elgin's deeds became widespread. Åkerblad's friend Edward Dodwell had travelled in Greece at the beginning of the century but only published his travelogue in 1819, by which time it was common practise to deprecate Elgin. Dodwell denounced the "wanton destruction" caused by Elgin and his agents; however, on the next page he proudly admitted that: "The head of the male figure in the western tympanon, [of the Parthenon] . . . is in my possession."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Edward Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour Through Greece During the Years 1801, 1805, and 1806*, 2 vols. (London, 1819), 1:452ff.; Simone Pomardi, *Viaggio nella Grecia fatto negli anni 1804, 1805, e 1806*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1820), 1:174ff. See plate 29 for Pomardi's own version of the opening of this tomb.

⁴⁸ Dodwell, *A classical tour*, 1:325. The head was long considered lost but it is probably a metope centaur head in the Wagner Museum, Würzburg. Frank Brommer, *Die Metopen des Parthenon*, 2 vols. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1967), 1:83.

Åkerblad commented in print on Fauvel's methods in 1800 and on Elgin's in 1811, but there seems to be little condemnation in British publications before Byron attacked Elgin in 1812. It is probable that seeing the sites themselves was an important part of the process; only by going to the actual places was it possible to understand the scale and the wider effects of the removals. Byron had anonymously mocked Elgin in 1810, but it was only after visiting Greece that his denigration became incisive.⁴⁹

In 1816 Åkerblad elaborated on his criticism in a letter to a Swedish friend who had visited London and seen the Parthenon marbles in the temporary shed built in the courtyard of Elgin's London house. Åkerblad and his Swedish friend were of the same opinion: the sculptures should have been left where they were found:

The marbles you have seen in London and which were barbarously taken from Greece by Lord Elgin have been bought by the British government and shall without doubt be displayed somewhat more suitably than how you found them. Indeed, you are perfectly right in saying that it would have been better to leave them where they were taken from. The damage that the villainous Lord has done is irreparable and even his compatriots that have visited Athens after him have sworn to relegate this man to public disparagement and loathing. You might have seen *Childe Harold* by Lord Byron where he is treated as deserved.⁵⁰

Åkerblad copied the verses from *Childe Harold's pilgrimage*... in which Byron took Elgin to task.⁵¹ This was confirmation that Byron's censure was appreciated, even if Åkerblad might have felt that the British were a little late in expressing their moral indignation. Byron's even more cutting poem on the looting in Greece, *The Curse of Minerva*, had not yet been published. As Åkerblad had foreseen, the sculptures Elgin sold to the British government in 1816 were soon exhibited in the British Museum.

Åkerblad himself tried to acquire artefacts on a smaller scale but he did not have enough money, nor did he have the political support that enabled ambassadors Choiseul-Gouffier and Elgin to obtain the necessary permits. On an earlier visit to the Troad in 1792 he had attempted to

⁴⁹ William St. Clair, *Lord Elgin and the Marbles*, 3rd rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998), 180ff.

⁵⁰ Åkerblad to Lars Jacob von Rööck, 2 February 1816, Brev till hovintendenten L. J. von Rööck 1796–1866, Sävstaholmssamlingen II. 94, SNA.

⁵¹ Vat. lat., fols. 70v–71r.

remove a bas-relief and when he returned to it in 1797 it was still there, but in another position:

I had a big slab of marble taken away, which had a bas-relief of a beautifully draped woman on one side. I think that it was a part of a metope from a Doric temple. I had the stone brought during the night to the garden of the Aga of Bounar-Baschi, where it was left lying as the Aga would not give me the permission to take it away with me. When I in the year of 1797 came back to Troy I found my stone in the same place where I left it, but it was knocked over and lying with the bas-relief towards the ground so it would not draw the attention of travellers.⁵²

Åkerblad had not succeeded in taking the stone away with him in 1792 and may then have changed his opinion about acquiring antiquities after seeing more examples of European voracity. However, it is more likely that he differentiated between free-lying marbles already distanced from their original context and the dismantling of existing monuments and the removal of sculptural and architectural elements.

It would be an over-simplification to assign all rapacious intentions in this sphere solely to French, British and Russian collectors. Had other nations or individuals had the economic means and the political leverage, they might have been similarly interested in acquiring antiquities. When Åkerblad applied for the position of Swedish art agent in Rome in 1800 he underlined how as an agent in Rome he could travel to acquire antiquities "in Greece... [where] my last sojourn convinced me of how cheaply the most rare things can be had."⁵³ The grapes are sour anyway, said the fox?

Nevertheless, Åkerblad's criticism of Fauvel's methods and the British collectors is both original and early. Other Swedish observers only became likewise critical of French and British acquisitiveness later on. The sensibility of Åkerblad and, for instance, Jacob Berggren—who would strongly criticize the looting in Egypt in the 1820s—is most probably born out of their position as third-party observers, coming from a nation without museums or powerful collectors. The evidence shows that it is difficult

⁵² Åkerblad in Lechevalier, *Reise nach Troas*, 230. The same episode is described, apparently contemporary to the fact in 1792, Vat. lat. 9784, fols. 55r–v. Other travellers noted a similar relief in the Aga's garden but it is not clear if it is the same as Åkerblad refers to. Cook, *Troad*, 146.

⁵³ Underdånigst Pro Memoria af J. D. Åkerblad, Stockholm 23 August 1800, Kongliga Museum, II Koncept, Äldre handlingar rörande Kongl. Museum 1790–1836, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

to demonstrate that there was a single European attitude towards the removal of antiquities. Opinions did vary across Europe despite its often being presented as a single cultural sphere, especially in its contacts with the Orient. Both Åkerblad and Berggren had seen the affected sites and understood the wider effects of the removals. As they were observers from a country that was not involved in the 'war for antiquities' this made it possible for them to see the removals from a different perspective.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ROMAN REPUBLIC 1798–99

The last diary entry from Åkerblad's stay in Greece is dated 29 August 1797. The following five months are undocumented, however, there are indications that he visited Mycenae and the Ionian island Zakynthos. The next time we hear from him he appeared in Florence at the beginning of February 1798, and on the 8th he was in Rome. He arrived a couple of days before the French troops entered the city. Åkerblad's movements in Italy until his return to Stockholm two years later are recorded in his notebook.¹

The French armies had invaded northern Italy in the spring of 1796 under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte. Italy was first considered to be a secondary front in the wars against the enemies of revolutionary France. However, the Italian campaign was immediately successful and the French had soon defeated both Italian armies and Austrian forces in Italy. In 1797 Austria signed the treaty of Campo Formio and recognized French sovereignty in large parts of Italy. The French troops went on to occupy Tuscany and entered Rome in February 1798.

On 15 February what would be the short-lived Roman Republic was declared and the pope was removed from power. The French only held the city until September of the following year, 1799, when Rome was invaded by Neapolitan troops.² The initial situation in Rome was chaotic and the French forces repressed any resistance. French officer Paul-Louis Courier (1772–1825) arrived in Rome during Åkerblad's stay, and this is probably when they first met. Courier described the difficult situation in the city: "Bread is not among the things sold here, everyone keeps for themselves what little they can get at great risk to their lives." Even the French had problems finding food: "Every man who is neither a commissioner nor a general, or valet or courtesan of one or the other, cannot find an egg to eat." And it was not only the population that suffered: "The Roman

¹ Vat. lat. 9784, fol. 23v; inscription copies in Vat. lat., fol. 61r; Vat. lat., fol. 30r.

² Maria Pia Donato, "La République Romaine de 1798–1799: Panorama des études récentes," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine*, 1998, 134–40.

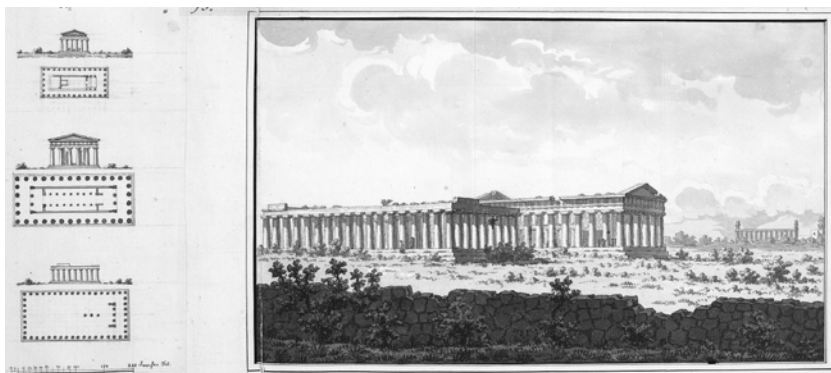


Figure 37. Temples in Paestum. Drawing by the Swedish architect Gustaf af Sillén (1762–1825) who visited Italy 1788–93. P. 93, X 292 g, UUL.

monuments are hardly treated any better than the people.”³ Courier continued by describing how the pillage and plunder occurring in Rome contrasted to the relatively ordered removal of artefacts and antiquities to fill Paris museums that the French had negotiated when they defeated the Papal States. The French also confiscated 500 manuscripts from the Vatican library to Paris.⁴

In amongst the chaos, Åkerblad used Rome as a base for his excursions. In April he went to Naples and saw the Greek temples at Paestum south of Salerno (Figure 37). Visiting Paestum had become compulsory for any learned visitor to Italy. The Magna Grecia city of Posidonia offers three of the best-preserved temples from Greek antiquity. They were only ‘rediscovered’ in the middle of the eighteenth century but soon became a required stop on the Grand Tour. As most travellers, artists and ‘connoisseurs’ never went to Greece, including most famously Winckelmann, the Greek temples at Paestum and in Sicily—for those that ventured further south—were their only contact with Greek classical architecture. Åkerblad could compare these temples with the best-preserved examples he had seen in Greece, especially the Athenian Theseion which he later wrote about (p. 373).

³ Courier to Adam Klewanski, Rome 8–14 January 1799, in *Paul-Louis Courier. Correspondance générale*, ed. Geneviève Viollet-le-Duc, 3 vols. (Paris: Klincksieck, 1976–85), 2:106–7, (hereafter *Courier*).

⁴ Jeanne Bignami Odier, *La Bibliothèque Vaticane de Sixte IV à Pie XI: Recherches sur l'histoire des collections de manuscrits* (Vatican City: Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, 1973), 185ff.

Another excursion he made was to Velletri where he visited Stefano Borgia's important collections at the *Museum Borgianum*.⁵ Borgia was a cardinal and leader of the Propaganda Fide in Rome and was one of the central characters in the field of oriental studies in late eighteenth-century Rome.⁶ He supported a community of Danish scholars in Rome, who in their turn ensured that he received financial support from the Danish crown when the French exiled him.⁷ One of Borgia's close collaborators was the Dane George Zoëga (1755–1809), who came to Rome for the first time in 1783.⁸

Åkerblad was interested in becoming the Swedish art agent in Rome and began to compiling a list of artists. He was introduced to the artists' community through Zoëga. One of these was Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770–1844), who had arrived in Rome in 1797. Åkerblad had no mercy when passing comment on Thorvaldsen: "Thorvaldsen Danish does nothing."⁹ Åkerblad told someone in Copenhagen about his opinion of Thorvaldsen on his way back to Sweden in 1800. The rumour was transmitted to Thorvaldsen in Rome, who valiantly defended himself against the accusation of laziness.¹⁰

In exchange for Zoëga's hospitality in Rome it appears that Thorvaldsen had started an affair with Zoëga's Italian wife (Figure 38). Thorvaldsen sketched Zoëga many times and the drawing on the left depicts him with the horns of a cuckold. His complicated domestic situation aside, Zoëga was an accomplished oriental scholar and especially well-versed in Coptic. He compiled a catalogue of Borgia's Coptic manuscripts that

⁵ The visit is documented by copies of Greek inscriptions and Coptic annotations. N 72, KB; Vat. lat., fol. 58r.

⁶ Borgia has recently received much attention, both for his role at the Propaganda Fide and as a central figure of late eighteenth century Roman cultural life. Josef Metzler, "Ein Mann mit neuen Ideen. Sekretär und Präfekt Stefano Borgia (1731–1804)," in *Sacrae congregationis de propaganda fide memoria rerum 1622–1972. Vol. 2, 1700–1815*, ed. Metzler (Rome: Herder, 1973); Paola Buzi, ed., *Catalogo dei manoscritti copti borgiani conservati presso la Biblioteca Vittorio Emanuele III di Napoli. Con un profilo scientifico di Stefano Borgia e Georg Zoega e una breve storia della formazione della collezione Borgiana* (Rome: Scienze e Lettere, 2009); "Kardinal Stefano Borgia och Sverige," *Lychnos*, 1937, 112–129.

⁷ Rigel Langella, ed., *Stefano Borgia e i danesi a Roma* (Velletri: Edizioni tra 8 e 9, 2000).

⁸ A. D. Jørgensen, *George Zoega: Et Minde Skrift* (Copenhagen, 1881); Carit Poul Andersen, *Rom på Zoëgas tid 1783–1809* (Copenhagen: GAD, 1970).

⁹ N72, KB.

¹⁰ Nicolai Abildgaard to Thorvaldsen, 21 July 1800, Copenhagen, nr. 3. 1800, m1, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen; Thorvaldsen to Abildgaard, Rome 24 October 1800, KBK, NKS 2337. See also H. J. Estrup's unpublished biography of Thorvaldsen, nr. 1–2, m29 I, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen.



Figure 38. Thorvaldsen. Pencil and ink drawing of Zoëga. Detail of larger sheet. C66r, Thorvaldsens Museum.

still serves as the first reference to this important collection. Zoëga was also deeply interested in ancient Egyptian culture and published a major work on obelisks, which summed up the current knowledge on Egyptian antiquity.¹¹

Zoëga's correspondence during the brief Roman Republic is illustrative. He welcomed the political changes and wrote with enthusiasm about the early stages, exalting the symbolic planting of a tree of liberty at the Campidoglio in February 1798, the same kind of tree that Åkerblad had seen in Holland in 1794. Zoëga was enthusiastic about the creation of an *Istituto Nazionale*, a Roman national academy of art and sciences based on the French model.¹² Initially he was a staunch republican but he soon lost his belief in the “beautiful words and high-flown phrases” of the occupiers.

¹¹ Zoëga, *Catalogus codicum Copticorum manuscriptorum qui in Museo Borgiano Velitris adservantur* (Rome, 1810, repr. 1903, 1973). Paola Orsatti, *Il fondo Borgia della Biblioteca Vaticana e gli studi orientali a Roma tra Sette e Ottocento* (Vatican City: Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, 1999); Zoëga, *De Origine et usu obeliscorum*. . . (Rome, 1797, publ. 1800). For Zoëga's accomplishments in Egyptian studies see Erik Iversen, *The myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in the European Tradition* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1961), 117ff. Recent titles on Zoëga include: Daniela Picchi, *Alle origini dell'egittologia. Le antichità egiziane di Bologna e di Venezia da un inedito di Georg Zoega* (Imola: La Mandragora, 2010).

¹² Zoëga to Münter, 17 February 1798; 24 March 1798; 5 May 1798, Rome, in Georg Zoëga (1755–1809). *Briefe und Dokumente* 2, 4 vols., ed. Øjvind Andreassen † and Karen Ascani (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2013), letters 736, 745, 754; Luigi Pepe, “L'Istituto nazionale della Repubblica romana,” *MEFRIM. Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 108, no. 2 (1996): 703–30.

The French rulers did nothing but “plunder and misrule; exploit, oppress and anger the People” and certainly did not install the ideals of freedom they had proclaimed but instead a “mix of Despotism and Anarchy that is threatening to end in the most dreadful way.”¹³ That Åkerblad shared this unhappiness about the pillage he witnessed during the Roman Republic is clear from his comment on Jean-Baptiste Wicar in his list of artists. Wicar was involved in the *Commission des sciences et des arts* which selected the works that were transported to Paris. Åkerblad simply gave him the epithet “Thief.”

Callmer describes this period as a year of undisturbed studies for Åkerblad in Rome, something that must have been difficult considering the turbulence and civil unrest. Many members of the foreign community in Rome left the city at this time.¹⁴ Nevertheless, no matter how chaotic the situation was, Rome still offered exceptional opportunities to survey Coptic texts in the Borgia collection, in the Propaganda Fide and in other Roman libraries. Åkerblad immediately started to study under Zoëga’s tutelage.¹⁵ As usual he worked intensely with the new language. After six months Zoëga described Åkerblad’s progress to Borgia: “Åkerblad studies the Coptic language with fervour, and he knows more of it than me at this point.”¹⁶ Other scholars would soon confirm Åkerblad’s exceptional knowledge of Coptic.

He was now confronted with a language whose origin was not yet fully known. Nor was the relationship of Coptic to other African and Asiatic languages understood.¹⁷ It was supposed that Coptic was the successor of the ancient Egyptian language, but as no one could read either hieroglyphs or the other ancient Egyptian scripts this remained an assumption.

Åkerblad himself was well-read in the history of Coptic studies. An annotated bibliography testifies to his familiarity with his predecessors.¹⁸

¹³ Zoëga to Münster, 10 October 1799, Rome, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*, letter 782.

¹⁴ Callmer, 200.

¹⁵ Zoëga to Borgia, 26 March 1798, Rome, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*, letter 747; Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, *Zoëga's Leben: Sammlung seiner Briefe und Beurtheilung seiner Werke*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, Tübingen 1819, repr. 1912–13), 2:300.

¹⁶ Zoëga to Borgia, 17 October 1798, Rome, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*, letter 769a.

¹⁷ The history of Coptic reception in Europe was until recently patchily covered. Alastair Hamilton’s ground-breaking work has rectified this: *The Copts and the West, 1439–1822. The European discovery of the Egyptian church* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006).

¹⁸ Vat. lat., fol. 3v: “Le P. Kircher etoit un des premières qui se sont occupé de la langue Copte il publia, *Lingua Aegyptica Restituta*, il fut suivi par *Bonjurius* /Bonjour/ auteur de *Exercitation monumenta Coptico-Aegyptica bibl. Valie, Elementa lingua Aegyptica*, et d’un

Åkerblad found most Coptic texts tedious because of their religious content. But there seemed to be a solution that would remedy the lack of interesting Coptic manuscripts. This hope reflected his earlier aspirations to find new texts when he travelled in the Ottoman Empire:

As I found myself in Rome at the time of the French expedition to Egypt I thought it wise to dedicate some months to studying the Coptic language, in the hope that the literary treasures of Egypt would soon open themselves to us, or at least that more interesting works than these depressing ascetic books that we have will be brought back by the scholars sent to that country.¹⁹

Preparing the Invasion of Egypt

Language proficiency was not only a scholarly concern; it was becoming highly politically-charged knowledge. That the capacity to speak the languages of the Eastern Mediterranean was becoming more important would become clear to Åkerblad in the next few years. While Swedish interest in the region was waning other nations were planning eastward expansion.

When Åkerblad left Constantinople in June 1797 he had not received any news on whether he would get further employment in Swedish foreign service. No instructions reached him during his travels in Greece or the first months in Italy. He was again without a position, but he was not in a hurry to return to Stockholm. He had not received any answers to his pleas; neither had the money he desperately needed (and which had been promised to him) arrived. Some money eventually did come, paid through Swedish merchants in Italy. This was the Turkish interpreter salary, the retention of which had been promised to him even when he was not serving in Constantinople. The pay was low but guaranteed a means of

autre ouvrage qui n'a jamais été imprimé sur les *Dynasties Egyptiennes*. En Angleterre Wilkins publia le *Nouveau Testament* en copte, en 1716, et une *Dissertation* sur cette langue adressée à Chamberlayne. Avant Wilkins, Bernard et Marshall avoient déjà écrit sur la littérature Egyptienne. Voyez *Commercium Literarium* p. Picquassius publié par Wincher à Leipzig en 1750. Wilkins donna son *Pentatauch Copte* en 1731. Renandont les *Liturgies Egyptiennes* en 1716 et *La Croze* en Allemagne compila son *dictionnaire Copte* en 1720 publié par Weide. Schlotzsius composa une *grammaire*. Walpurga en *Didymus Tauriensis* un *Rudimentum Literatura Coptica*. En Danemarc Hvideus, Birch et Schow se sont occupé de la littérature copte à Rome, Basschau Turkus publia un *Missal* et une *grammaire*."

¹⁹ Åkerblad, *Sur les noms coptes*, 340.

survival.²⁰ While in Rome he wrote a private letter to Rosenhane, begging for an appointment and invoking the fact that he had resisted a French offer:

if I for a moment could have set aside my attachment, my love, my devotion for the same [the fatherland] ... I would have considered an offer that was made me a few months ago to accompany the famous French sea expedition, with the most eminent prospects to achieve honour, profit and reputation.²¹

Åkerblad had been invited to join the French invasion of Egypt. He continued to explain the advantages of such a position and why he had not accepted it:

So flattering was this offer to my vanity, and so fitting for my inclinations, as I was almost sure that I more than anyone else could have been of service, maybe even indispensable, nevertheless I had not enough courage to accept the offer believing it was my duty to first wait for what in Sweden was due to me.

The French offer was truly a flattering invitation; even so, it poses a whole range of questions. On what grounds was Åkerblad invited to the join the French invasion of Egypt?

The invasion of Egypt is one of the most debated episodes of early European colonialism and has been the object of fascination ever since the French fleet left Toulon in 1798. The literature on the invasion is copious and most aspects have been treated in depth. Recent research has underlined the expedition's background and traced its ideological foundations through the exposition of colonial impulses, the rivalry between Britain and France, post-revolutionary France's expansionist ambitions etc.²² Such ambitions were—as Åkerblad had witnessed—an all-encompassing worry for the diplomatic community and the Ottoman state in Constantinople during the 1780s and 1790s.

²⁰ This salary was paid until he was appointed to The Hague in 1803 where he got an ordinary diplomat's pay and the compensation for being an interpreter was suspended. JDÅ to Lars von Engeström, 28 November 1814, Rome, *Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, Enskilda personer, 1814–1816*, vol. 2, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

²¹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, Rome 5 August 1798, UUL, G231 h.

²² A few examples: Henry Laurens, *Les Origines intellectuelles de l'expédition d'Égypte : l'orientalisme islamisant en France, 1698–1798* (Istanbul: Isis, 1987); Laurens, *L'expédition d'Égypte 1798–1801* (Paris: Colin, 1989); Yves Laissus, *L'Égypte, une aventure savante : avec Bonaparte, Kléber, Menou: 1798–1801* (Paris: Fayard 1998); Patrice Bret, ed., *L'expédition d'Égypte, une entreprise des Lumières, 1798–1801...* (Cachan: Technique & documentation, 1999).

A great part of the bibliography on the invasion is centred on the scientific detail of the invasion forces. These works cover a vast array of subjects mirroring the encyclopaedic ambitions of the scientists. But there is an imbalance between the near-obsession with the scholarly work and the political goals of the invasion. The invasion was a bloody affair and local resistance was remorselessly punished. The fleet which left Toulon for Egypt in 1798 comprised about 36,000 men under arms. If additional personnel are included the total number leaving France probably exceeded 50,000 men. Less than two hundred of them belonged to the scientific detail.²³

To an outsider, the lack of questioning of Revolutionary and Napoleonic myths is surprising. An example is the use of the word *expedition* which is the term most often used to describe the invasion. What is in fact being discussed is a military invasion that went badly wrong and that was turned into a 'scientific' endeavour to save the honour and glory of France. It must be admitted that turning a catastrophic military campaign into an important scientific expedition is no mean feat. The scientific detail of the invasion forces was an exceptional scientific undertaking. It was nevertheless only a sideshow in the great scheme of Mediterranean policy of the major powers.

So would Åkerblad have been part of the scholarly detail, the *Commission des sciences et des arts*, if he had accepted the French offer? The selection process of the members of the commission of scholars is not known in detail. Recommendations, family ties and chance determined who was short-listed; the preparations were made in extreme haste.²⁴ The secrecy of the preparations in conjunction with the fact that many records have been destroyed has left large lacunae in the archival material and to date no record of Åkerblad possible involvement in the expedition has been found.²⁵

But there is a straightforward explanation for Åkerblad's invitation. The mathematician Gaspard Monge was already on his way to Rome before the Egyptian invasion was formally decided on. In Rome he was

²³ The numbers are still discussed. The best summing up is given by Philippe de Meulenaere who has published the existing documents listing both troops and scientific detail: *Bibliographie raisonnée des témoignages de l'expédition d'Égypte : (1798–1801)* (Paris: Chamonal, 1993), 239–82.

²⁴ Yves Laissus, "La Commission des sciences et des arts et l'Institut d'Égypte," in Bret, *L'expédition d'Égypte*, 37–41.

²⁵ Laissus, *L'Égypte, une aventure savante*, 557, 561. Personal communication with Yves Laissus, February 2006.

ordered by Napoleon to both recruit people and acquire instruments and machinery in support of the invasion. The Propaganda Fide again proved its usefulness, this time not in the service of the church, but for spreading French propaganda in Egypt. In addition to the pillage described by Courier and the works of art transported from Rome to Paris, the French secured a fair amount of scientific war booty as Monge explained in a letter to Napoleon:

I will at once go to the Propaganda where I will have three printing presses dismantled and put in cases with all utensils and materials needed for their service. . . . I will see to it that each press will have a full set of Latin, Arabic and Syriac typefaces so that each press by itself can function in the four languages. The loading of these objects will be made without raising any suspicions.²⁶

Monge looked for useful books and maps. He was not impressed with the Propaganda; the knowledge contained there was not useful for an invasion: "There is nothing at the Propaganda but some old books."²⁷ He was also looking for people to hire; in particular, the army needed interpreters. Monge was clear about which was the most important language: "The Arabic language will be the most necessary. I hope to find four men for this purpose here."²⁸

The *Commission des sciences et des arts* consisted of c. 170 members. Of the total number of *savants et artists* there were ten *hommes des lettres et secrétaires* and fifteen *consuls et interprètes*. The main groups of skilled people within the commission were engineers, geographers and natural scientists, not to forget twenty-four printers.²⁹

The group of *orientalistes, interprètes* also included language scholars. Åkerblad did not exaggerate when he wrote that his linguistic skills would have made him a perfect member of the force. His combined knowledge of Arabic and Turkish—the two essential languages in Egypt—would have made him an exceptional member of the *Commission*. His knowledge of Modern Greek and some of the other languages spoken by the foreign communities would have been an additional bonus. He knew this and it

²⁶ Monge to Napoleon, 16 March 1798, Rome, in Clément de La Jonquière, *L'Expédition d'Égypte*, 5 vols. (Paris: H. Charles-Lavauzelle, 1899–1907), 1:321–323.

²⁷ Monge to Napoleon, 20 March 1798, Rome, in Louis de Launay, *Un grand Français, Monge, fondateur de l'École polytechnique*. . . (Paris: Pierre Roger, 1933), 189.

²⁸ Monge to Napoleon, Rome 27 March 1798, in La Jonquière, *L'Expédition d'Égypte*, 1:327.

²⁹ Laissus, *L'Égypte, une aventure savante*, 64, list of the official members, 523ff.

was not a moment for false modesty. Even his knowledge of Coptic would have been crucial. Though it was not spoken Åkerblad could have evaluated manuscripts in Coptic convents and churches. According to Silvestre de Sacy no one in the invasion forces could read a single line of Coptic.³⁰

Monge believed it would be difficult to find Arabic speakers in Rome and knowing his diligence he surely took pains to meet every prospective participant. But why did Åkerblad not accept the offer? Had he accepted it, he would surely have, if he had survived: “achieve[d] honour, gain and reputation” as he had put it. The reasons for his rejection stated in the letter to Rosenhane do not ring entirely true. He had not shown himself to be particularly eager to follow the demands of the Swedish state recently. He might anyway have judged his possibilities realistically. To join foreign military forces in these turbulent times could have excluded him from future Swedish service. Swedish relations with France were not excellent and there was little hope of an improvement. Åkerblad had witnessed the reaction to French events in Sweden and must have been aware of the fact that radical political change in Sweden was no longer conceivable. He could also have had more prosaic reasons to avoid joining a physically dangerous and arduous campaign; he knew about the deprivations of war from his time in Finland in 1789.

While Monge faithfully executed his orders in Rome he was himself reluctant to join the invasion, but Napoleon was adamant: “I count on the printing presses from the Propaganda and on you, even if I would have to sail up the Tiber with the squadron to get you.” Three days later Napoleon underlined the importance of the printing presses: “We will have a third of the Institut [National] and instruments of all kinds with us. You are advised to bring especially the Arabic printing presses from the Propaganda.”³¹ The mix of scholars, scientific instruments and printing presses ostensibly meant that the printing was to be used for scientific work. It was, in part, but the main purpose for bringing printing to Egypt was for propaganda reasons. Bonaparte’s orders were clear; as soon as Alexandria was taken the machinery must be set to work immediately: “As soon as the Arabic presses are working, 4000 proclamations in Arabic shall be printed.”³² The proclamations were printed but Monge had not

³⁰ Sacy to Münster, 12 January 1800, Paris, in *Münster*, 6:170.

³¹ Napoleon to Monge, 2, 5 April 1798, in *Correspondance de Napoléon 1^{er}*, vol. 4 (Paris, 1860), letters no. 2471, p. 39; no. 2479, p. 43.

³² Napoleon, Ordre, 17 July 1798, Alexandria, in *Correspondance de Napoléon*, no. 2784, p. 228.

been successful in hiring interpreters. Al-Jabartī who followed the French invasion from Cairo sardonically listed errors and misapprehensions in Napoleon's proclamation and ended: "All his [Napoleon's] talk is incorrect and its author to be cursed."³³

The French invasion was a fact; Egypt would never be the same again. Had the story ended here, if Åkerblad had refused the offer, not gone to Egypt but turned to other affairs, we would have no cause to dwell on the invasion and its history in this context. But the defining episode of Åkerblad's scholarship in the eyes of posterity was his contribution to the deciphering of Egyptian writing. This came as a direct effect of French military actions in the Nile Delta.

Most of what has recently been written about the invasion of Egypt, and especially its 'scientific' component, displays an ambiguity towards the venture. Marie-Noëlle Bourguet summed this up on the occasion of the bicentenary of the 1798 invasion. She confronts the views of colonial historians who see the invasion as an aspect of European expansion and dominance with the views of historians of science, who see the scientific work as the prehistory of archaeology and Egyptology. The attempt to connect the different perspectives is seldom successful and Bourguet makes the difficulty explicit: "But the relations between these two aspects—the political and the scholarly—remains in the shade." Egyptian historians commemorated the bicentenary in a slightly less ambiguous fashion.³⁴

What would Åkerblad's role have been? That of a language scholar perusing long-awaited Coptic manuscripts and making an inventory of the rich collections of al-Azhar, or that of an interpreter between French officers and local resistance fighters agreeing on terms of capitulation? Would he have drafted the propaganda manifestos printed in thousands of copies affixed all over the cities and proudly announced in the French paper published in Cairo, the *Courier de l'Égypte*? The French army published profusely, and no doubt a language scholar with Åkerblad's specialities would have been intimately connected to the war efforts.

The general problem of scholarly participation in wars in the Near East does not become less complicated with time. The role of an outsider such as Åkerblad puts the issue in relief. It is difficult to move out of the shade

³³ al-Jabartī, *History of Egypt*, 3:9.

³⁴ Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, "Des savants à la conquête de l'Égypte? Science, voyage et politique au temps de l'expédition française," in Bret, *L'expédition d'Égypte*, 21. See for instance the special issue *L'expédition de Bonaparte vue d'Égypte* of the review *Égypte monde arabe*, 2nd ser., 1 (1999).

highlighted by Bourguet, possibly because these issues are still of immediate concern and any statement will resemble a moral judgment that could easily be projected on our own times. Recent works on the French invasion have again underlined the colonial aspects of the campaign and made explicit comparisons with contemporary invasions and Western policy towards the Middle East.³⁵

Åkerblad was thus still in Rome without a position after having refused to go to Egypt. What Åkerblad did not know when he wrote to Rosenhane was that the French fleet had been destroyed by the British navy at Alexandria three days before. This left the French army stranded in Egypt and permanently changed the balance of power in the Eastern Mediterranean. He followed the news from Egypt and the exploits of the *Commission des sciences et des arts*. But instead of getting access to more Coptic texts through the French invasion a large number of the Coptic manuscripts he had studied in Rome were taken by the French to Paris. The artefacts removed from Egypt made Paris and London even more attractive as centres for oriental and Egyptian studies at the beginning of the next century.

After having spent a year in Rome, Åkerblad decided to return to Sweden. He left on 9 May 1799.³⁶ A passport issued by the *Repubblica Romana*, *n. fiorile Anno 7. della Repubblica* [30 April 1799] describes Åkerblad as a blond man of ordinary stature, with a round face, wide nose, regular mouth, and dark eyes.³⁷

On his way from Rome he again passed through Livorno. It was a lively merchant town with a tradition of Swedish mercantile presence.³⁸ What it lacked was any scholarly tradition. In a letter to a friend Åkerblad teasingly asked how anyone could nurture learned interests in “the most unlearned of Italian cities where you do not hear of anything else than bills of exchange and colonial merchandise.”³⁹ Åkerblad also mocked the city’s amusements: “the theatre is pitiful and your prima donna . . . weighs

³⁵ E.g.: Juan Ricardo Cole, *Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007).

³⁶ Vat. lat., fol. 30r: “Mai 9 départ de Rome, 12. Sienne, 14. Florence; Juin 21. départ de Florence, 22. Pise, Livorne; Juillet 22. à Pise, 29. départ delà, 30. Florence; Août 10. départ de Florence, 12. Bologne, 16. Ferrare, 17. Rovigo, 18. Padoue, 22. Venise; Sept; 22. Padova, 26. Palaio, Arqua, 27. Bataglia, 28. Padova; Octob. 3. Altichiero, 19. Venedig.”

³⁷ No. 2877, box 93, Suchtelen’s autographs, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg.

³⁸ Wilhelm Lundström, “Från ‘Livornos svenska period,’” *Nordisk Tidskrift*, 1911, 477–88.

³⁹ JDÅ to Courier, Florence 16 November 1811, in *Courier*, 2:62.

at least 500 pounds.” Nevertheless he stayed longer than planned. The city’s role as the crossroads for Mediterranean shipping brought other benefits and he added: “I would already have left for Genoa if I had not found old friends here from the Levant whom I met again with great pleasure.”⁴⁰

He had approached Rosenhane from Rome and asked for a letter to present to a Swedish captain of one of the frigates that usually visited Livorno in the fall. He justified the demand for military assistance by invoking the constant fear of piracy: “to let me embark on the frigate some chests containing books, manuscripts, antiquities etc. that I have collected during my travels in Greece and Italy, which would be exposed to the risk of being abducted by privateers and pirates, that are more than ever plying the Mediterranean.”⁴¹ Swedish warships were now regularly patrolling the Mediterranean to protect Swedish merchant shipping. Considering his laments about money in the same letter it is likely that the chance to get his collections transported to Sweden for free might have been an equally important reason.

Åkerblad mentioned his acquisition of antiquities on several occasions. Although he never had enough money to make any substantial purchases of important antiquities or extremely rare manuscripts, some were of great artistic quality (Figure 9). He managed to acquire a fair number of oriental manuscripts and made an inventory.⁴² Most of the manuscripts were bought during his travels in the East; the Samaritan fragment he acquired in Jaffa is mentioned as well as a wide range of Arabic, Turkish and Persian manuscripts, many of them bought in Constantinople. Several of his Coptic manuscripts bear the mark of the Coptic church in Rome and may have been acquired during Åkerblad’s 1798–99 sojourn in the city.

⁴⁰ JDÅ to Daniele Francesconi, 26 June 1799, Livorno, Scenking Diedrichs, 131 K 1, HSS–mag, Amsterdam University Library.

⁴¹ JDÅ to Rosenhane, 5 August 1798, Rome, G 231 h, UUL.

⁴² Vat. lat., fols. 73r–75r. The list, in Latin as customary, comprises 4 vellum manuscripts; 6 Coptic manuscripts, religious texts and hymns; 5 Ethiopian, religious texts; 23 Arabic manuscripts with a greater variation of contents, some geographical works, bibliographies, sermons, medicinal, e.g. a treatise of Avicenna, Korans, anthologies of poetry, history, logic, astronomy, Christian hymns; 17 Persian manuscripts with likewise mixed content, astronomy, history, several works of poetry by famous Persian poets, mirrors for princes; 27 Turkish manuscripts of various content including grammars and dictionaries and a collection of treaties between the Porte and France and another of treaties between Russia and the Porte, a catalogue of the manuscripts of the S. Sofia library; 3 Tatar titles, a dictionary, a life of poets and a history of Alexander. There is also a list of printed books which includes books of reference, like Golius’ and Castell’s dictionaries, various grammars, Hebrew bibles and parts of the bible in various languages and other religious texts.

Despite his attempts to ship his collection to Sweden it remained in Italy. That vermin could have destroyed the collection tells us that it mainly consisted of paper: "Since almost three years all of my collections that I own in Italy are united in Livorno... these collections that now amount to 9 heavy chests are according to what [the Sw. consul] Grabien writes much damaged by moths."⁴³

Åkerblad later sold off parts when he tried to finance his return to Sweden in 1805.⁴⁴ During the Napoleonic wars he was cut off from Sweden and came into serious economical difficulties. As soon as the European borders opened up after Napoleon's defeat in 1814 Åkerblad took the opportunity to sell his few valuable possessions. He wrote a brief list—only quoted partly—that in certain respects reads like advertising:

A very old Deuteronomy fragment in Samaritan... The oriental library of Haggi Chalfa... that cost me 50 ducats in Constantinople... 17 Persian manuscripts, some of the greatest beauty, a Chah-namé written on Samarcand paper with more than 70 miniatures... 3 Tatar manuscripts and among those a very rare Tatar-Turkish dictionary.⁴⁵

The Russian envoy in Stockholm, the Dutchman Jan Pieter van Suchtelen (1751–1836) wrote on the bottom of this document: "Notice, in M. Åkerblad's hand, of the manuscripts I bought from him in January 1815." Suchtelen was very active on the Stockholm antiquities market. The transaction was probably mediated by either a friend or Åkerblad's sister in Stockholm. The sale was mentioned in 1815 by one of Åkerblad's close Roman friends: "Åkerbland is selling all the books to survive."⁴⁶ Åkerblad's oriental manuscripts became an important part of Suchtelen's vast collection that was sold to the Russian state after his death. It is now divided between several Russian institutions and almost all of Åkerblad's manuscripts have been identified.⁴⁷

⁴³ JDÅ to Bergstedt, 13 August 1804, Paris, F 651 b, UUL

⁴⁴ JDÅ to Lagerswärd, 20 February 1807, Rome, Italica 31, SNA.

⁴⁵ No. 2878, box 93, Suchtelen's autographs, National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg

⁴⁶ Francesco Cancellieri to Aubin-Louis Millin, 28 October 1815, Rome, fol. 317, MS FR 24680, BNF.

⁴⁷ This section was only made possible by Olga Vasilyeva's detective work in several Russian institutions.

When Åkerblad died in Rome 1819 he had few possessions, the estate inventory is extremely short.⁴⁸ He had been forced to sell what he had during the lean years. His collection of “antiquities and curiosities,” which had remained in Stockholm when he left Sweden permanently in 1801, was put up for sale by his sister. She approached the Stockholm antiquities academy. Åkerblad had been a member of the academy and it was natural to offer the objects to the main Stockholm antiquities institution. The academy was willing to pay 200 rix-dollars and the protocol added that the offer should be made promptly so that Demoiselle Åkerblad would not sell to anyone else. She obviously thought that the sum was too low and offered the collection to Suchtelen instead. His bid was higher but she reserved the option to sell to the academy for the same amount if they were disposed to raise their offer. The academy did not and Suchtelen bought this second part of Åkerblad’s collection.⁴⁹

There is no mention of manuscripts in this second sale but it is probable that some of Åkerblad’s documents that ended up in Suchtelen’s collection were sold at this occasion. Examples of these papers are Åkerblad’s Ottoman passports (Figure 32) and the passport issued in 1799 by the *Repubblica Romana*.

One Greek artefact owned by Åkerblad is traceable. This is an object from his first voyage in the 1780s. It is a small inscribed piece of marble Åkerblad acquired on the island of Imbros, close to the Dardanelles, while touring the archipelago in 1785 (Figure 39). He wrote about the inscription to a friend: “[it] was found at Imbros and is presently in my little collection of antiquities in Stockholm.”⁵⁰ The next time the inscription surfaced it was in the collection of the British Museum. Percy Smythe bought it when he was ambassador in Stockholm in 1817–19 either from Åkerblad’s sister or from Suchtelen. The inscribed marble is a minor Greek artefact, and its meandering over Europe has in itself little significance. It nevertheless shows both the level of Åkerblad’s collecting and the value attributed to such “antiquities and curiosities” by the Stockholm academy.

⁴⁸ Ulisse Pentini to Chancery Board, 15 May 1819, Rome, no. 973, *Skrivelser från konsuler*, vol. 66, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

⁴⁹ Vitterhetsakademiens protokoll, 20 April, 18 August, 13 October, 11 November 1819, Protokoll 1816–20, Ämbetsarkivet 2, KVHAA.

⁵⁰ Approximately 18 × 33 cm. British Museum, Greek inscription no. LVIII. *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, no. 2156. Åkerblad published it in: *Sopra due laminette*; JDÅ to unknown [most probably Daniel Wyttenbach], 31 May 1803, The Hague, Waller MS, UUL.



Figure 39. Åkerblad's Imbros inscription, now in basement storage at the British Museum. Greek inscription LVIII. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Runes on the Venice Marble Lion

Åkerblad changed his plans and instead of going to Genoa he went from Livorno to the Veneto. During Åkerblad's stay there in 1799 he was again able to witness the impact of the French invasions on the peninsula. Venice had capitulated in 1797, marking the end of Venetian independence. At the time of his visit to Padua and Venice Åkerblad's Roman acquaintance, cardinal Stefano Borgia, was also in the Veneto as he had been exiled from Rome in 1798. After the death of the pope in 1799 Borgia participated in the conclave held in Venice to elect the new pope. Borgia left Åkerblad in Padua in October where Åkerblad met the oriental scholar Simone Assemani. Åkerblad soon arrived in Venice and met Borgia again in the Marciana library. Borgia would continue to follow the scholarship of "Mr Akerblad my Swedish friend" and was especially interested in the work on the Rosetta inscription a few years later.⁵¹

⁵¹ Borgia to Zoëga, 12 October, 9 November 1799, Venice, letters 784, 790, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*; Borgia to Münter, 5 February, 21 May 1803, Rome, NKS 1698, KBK.

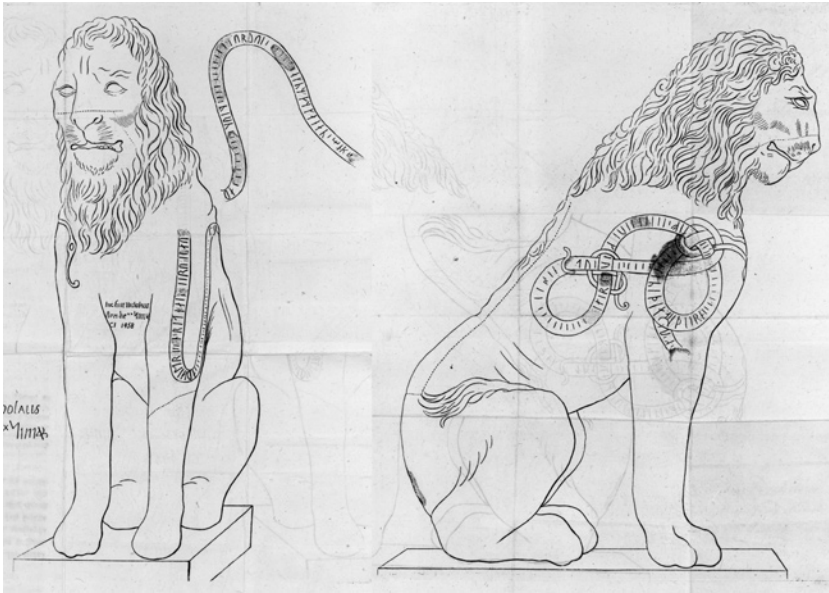


Figure 40. Åkerblad's printed drawings of the Venice lion. Åkerblad, *Runskrift på Sittande Marmorleyonet*. UUL.

In Venice Åkerblad inspected the Greek lions flanking the main entrance to the *Arsenale*, the city's great naval and shipbuilding yard. They were taken in Athens during a Venetian attack in 1687. On one of the lions he found two inscriptions that he immediately identified as runic, that is of Scandinavian origin (Figure 40). In the notice he wrote about the runes he expressed his amazement that no one before him had noticed the inscriptions. Many observers had written about the lions, including the famous Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi (around 1611–82) and Goethe.⁵² The fact that Nordic visitors had not noticed them was especially remarkable. The signs were difficult to read but the runic script was clearly noticeable, even from a certain distance and “should not have been possible to overlook or misinterpret by anyone who had ever seen Runes.”⁵³

⁵² Gunnar Jarring. “Evliya Çelebi och Marmorlejonet från Pireus,” *Fornvännen* 73 (1978): 1–4; Johann Friedrich Crome, “Goethe und die griechischen Löwen in Venedig,” *Goethe: Neue Folge des Jahrbuchs der Goethe-Gesellschaft* 23 (1961): 353–55. Åkerblad also copied other inscriptions found on the same lion. Vat. lat., fol. 31r.

⁵³ Åkerblad, “Om en Runskrift på det Sittande Marmorleyonet i Venedig, af Sekr. Åkerblad,” *Skandinavisk Museum* 1800, printed in Copenhagen 1803, 4.

Åkerblad did not venture to read the runes, they are too damaged to read but can be dated to around the eleventh century. He admitted he had insufficient knowledge even to attempt an explanation but proposed that Nordic soldiers or mercenaries in Byzantium may have made the inscriptions.

Less surprising to Åkerblad than the fact that the inscriptions went unnoticed by northerners was that Italian scholars had overlooked them: “that the Italian scholars have not noticed them is not surprising, what is not Latin or Greek is mostly unknown or appears of little significance to them.” This phrase would soon be contested. Another task was to establish the age and origin of the sculptures. Åkerblad frequented the noble salons in Venice, where he met Antonio Canova (1757–1822), the most famous of living Italian sculptors.⁵⁴ On his walks Åkerblad visited the lions accompanied by his acquaintance. They especially discussed the lion with the runic inscription: “In my belief the lion is surely a Greek work. Canova, Italy’s greatest Statuaire and one of its finest Connoisseurs of Antiquity with whom I several times visited the monument, agrees with me.”⁵⁵

Åkerblad sent his short notice on the lion to a friend in Copenhagen—who after many delays saw to it that the notice was published in the short-lived journal *Skandinavisk Museum*. He drew the illustrations himself and begged his friend to supervise how the drawing was prepared for publication.⁵⁶ Åkerblad always took great care with illustrations. In Rome in the 1810s Aubin-Louis Millin (introduced below) used Åkerblad’s expertise to inspect and vouch for the quality of the illustrations for his publications in Paris. Their common friend Francesco Cancellieri, who acted as Millin’s agent in Rome, was reprimanded by Millin for not consulting Åkerblad about an illustration: “I am angry that Mr Akerbladt could not see the drawing of Mr Camilli and give his approval.”⁵⁷ Åkerblad was well aware of the importance of exactness when illustrating both scripts and antiquities.

Åkerblad re-published the pages on the lion in Millin’s journal, *Magasin encyclopédique*.⁵⁸ He communicated the translation to his old friend

⁵⁴ Guido Sartorio, *Luigi Carrer* (Rome: Società editrice Dante Alighieri, 1900), 54.

⁵⁵ Åkerblad, *Runskrift på Sittande Marmorleyonet*, 7.

⁵⁶ JDÅ to Münster, 31 October, 21, 28 November 1800, Stockholm, in *Münster*, 5aff.

⁵⁷ Millin to Cancellieri, 16 January 1816, Paris, fol. 295, Add MS 22,891, BL. Cancellieri’s receipts for the payments he made to artists, fols. 355ff.

⁵⁸ Åkerblad, “Notices sur deux inscriptions en caractères runiques trouvées à Venise, et sur les Varanges, par M. Akerblad, avec les remarques de M. d’Ansse de Villosion,” *Magasin encyclopédique* 9, t. 5 (1804), 24–74.

Villoison “who found it appropriate to add long notes to it, these are without doubt quite highly learned, but have little in common with my notice.” Åkerblad’s notice required ten pages while Villoison’s notes ran to forty pages. He explained why he also had it printed separately: “Out of courtesy I had to let his long commentaries be printed with my maybe too short notice and thus a small brochure was created.”⁵⁹

After the notice was published in French it reached a larger audience. The polymath and prolific writer Luigi Bossi got hold of a copy of the French edition from August Wilhelm von Schlegel who was travelling in Italy with Madame de Staël. Schlegel, brother of Friedrich mentioned above, was an acquaintance of Åkerblad’s. Bossi published a philippic against Åkerblad in the form of a letter addressed to Schlegel.⁶⁰ It is interesting in how it contrasts different methods of historical interpretation. It shows how national sentiment played an important role when deciphering inscriptions and attributing origins to what may have seemed an innocuous marble lion.

In contrast to Åkerblad’s opinion, Bossi maintained that the lions were of Etruscan origin, even though it was common knowledge that they had been taken in Athens by the Venetians. He furthermore claimed that the inscriptions were pre-Latin ‘pelasgic’ characters, not runes. Bossi’s explanation was that “the Pelasgians in Greece originate from the Pelasgians living above Cortona [an ancient Tuscan town].” Bossi’s speculative reading of Herodotus confirmed this. Bossi’s argument was that much of the art and culture in Greece was exported from Italy to Greece by these *Pelasgians*, or *Tyrrhenians*, as he also called them.⁶¹ Bossi took offence at Åkerblad’s statement that Italian scholars were not interested in anything but Latin and Greek and listed scholars and their works to contradict Åkerblad’s ironic comment.

The assertion that the lions were of Pelasgian origins was emblematic of Bossi’s view of Italian history. The concept of a Pelasgian Italian past was a way of establishing an Italian prehistoric culture as the basis of Greek civilization. The myth-shrouded Pelasgians supposedly predated the ‘Greek’ population in Greece, and Bossi propagated the idea that these peoples originated from Italy. Åkerblad, who was steeped in a different idea about

⁵⁹ JDÅ to Bergstedt, 13 August 1804, Paris, F 651 b, UUL.

⁶⁰ Luigi Bossi, *Lettre de M. Louis Bossi, de Milan, sur deux inscriptions prétendues runiques trouvées à Venise, avec des observations sur les runes et trois gravures* (Turin, 1805), 32 pages, 3 plates.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 15f.

the historical development of the Eastern Mediterranean, could not take such claims seriously. He knew that rather than any transmission from West to East, one would have to look to the East to understand the development of Greek culture. Later he mocked Bossi in no equivocal manner: "Bossi is even more of an ass... and would have merited another few lashes."⁶²

Of course Åkerblad knew that there was more than Latin and Greek scholarship in Italy. His intention was probably only to make an ironic comment on the lack of curiosity for things not classical that he felt was an Italian trait. Bossi was later criticized on several occasions, but not in public as far as we know. Åkerblad might have learnt to refrain from putting his criticism in print, but in private his irony was unfettered: "But quiet! For the love of God, do not tell a living soul that I find Italian journals detestable, if you do the very learned Bossi of Milan... will wage a deathly war against me."⁶³ Other northern observers shared his sometimes ironic view of Italian scholarship. Wilhelm von Humboldt quipped from Rome in 1803 to his friend, the Swedish diplomat Karl Gustav von Brinkman, an acquaintance of Åkerblad's: "I cannot yet say much about Italian scholars, except for that, there are very few now."⁶⁴

The polemics around the Venice lion are exemplary in that they distinguish between different methods of interpreting historical evidence. It is an example of how 'antiquarian' debate related to, and shaped historical thinking and methodology.⁶⁵ It is hard to imagine that Åkerblad could mistake such an inscription; his knowledge of scripts and graphic puzzles was exceptional. Nevertheless, the Italic/Pelasgic interpretation of the runes was upheld even decades later.⁶⁶ The debate and speculations on pre-Roman Italic culture flourished over the following decades. Both promoters and detractors of a united Italian state exploited the image of a pre-Roman Italy.⁶⁷

⁶² JDÅ to Ciampi, 15 June 1816, KVHAA.

⁶³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 13 April 1816, KVHAA.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm von Humboldt to Karl Gustav von Brinkman, 10 December 1803, Rome, in *Wilhelm von Humboldts Briefe an Karl Gustav von Brinkman*, ed. Albert Leitzmann (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1939), 141.

⁶⁵ For a discussion of the importance of such debates see: Joseph M. Levine, *Dr. Woodward's Shield: History, Science, and Satire in Augustan England* (Berkeley: California UP, 1977).

⁶⁶ E.g.: "Åkerblad believes them (rather strangely) to be Runic," Francis Coghlan, *Handbook for European Tourists* (London, 1845), 574.

⁶⁷ Piero Treves, *L'idea di Roma e la cultura italiana del secolo 19* (Milano: Ricciardi, 1962), 19–35.

The construction of a great Italic past served as a model for future Italian greatness in a time when the peninsula was mired in political upheavals and largely run by foreign powers. But it was not only a matter of distancing oneself from foreign masters. When the Neapolitan kingdom once again became independent after the French wars and occupation, a committee proposed that it should rename its provinces to pre-Roman toponyms: Sannium instead of Molise, Lucania instead of Basilicata etc., all to distance itself from a Roman colonial past that was now represented by the Papal States in Rome.⁶⁸ Such were also the ambitions of the rulers of Tuscany that for a period called their territory *Il regno d'Etruria*, forging a connection to the hazy Etruscan times pre-dating Roman supremacy.

Still making his way to Stockholm, Åkerblad left Venice in December 1799 and arrived in Göttingen on 12 January.⁶⁹ He met and worked with Christian Gottlob Heyne, one of the most influential classical scholars of the period. Heyne was professor at Göttingen and also a long-serving director of the university library, from 1764 until his death. Heyne was one of the main protagonists in the transformation of the various areas of classical studies into an academic discipline. He published prolifically and wrote in the main Göttingen journal *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* which frequently reported on Swedish matters.⁷⁰

During the months in Göttingen in 1800 Åkerblad presented a reading of a bilingual Greek and Phoenician tombstone that he had seen in Athens in 1797 (Figure 41). The reading was printed in the Göttingen Royal Scientific Society Acta.⁷¹

Åkerblad made a favourable impression on the local academy, the prestigious *Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*. The current director, a position which rotated annually, proposed him for membership on 27 March 1800: "Herr Åkerblad... is known as a man of much knowledge. ... I believe he is very worthy of being our correspondent and solicit the

⁶⁸ John A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions (1780–1860)* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), 309.

⁶⁹ Vat. lat., fol. 30r: "Decemb. Départ de Venise, arrivé a Munich, Augsbourg, Nuremberg, 1800; Janvier 4. Gotha, 12. Göttingen."

⁷⁰ Marianne Heidenreich, *Christian Gottlob Heyne und die alte Geschichte* (Munich: Saur, 2006); Martin Vöhler, "Christian Gottlob Heyne und das Studium des Altertums in Deutschland," in *Disciplining Classics—Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2002).

⁷¹ Åkerblad, *Marmor Graecis et Phoeniciis*; Heyne, *Göttingische Anzeigen*, 20 February 1800, 281–82. Åkerblad corrected the Göttingen printing of the letter 'Zain' and gave a better rendering in *Sopra due laminette*, 12. The inscription is *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, no. 116, now in the British Museum.

opinions of our members upon the matter.”⁷² The director’s nomination met with approval and the academicians elected Åkerblad as a corresponding member of the historian class.

In Göttingen Åkerblad had opportunities to meet authorities in his fields and as he had no promise of a position in Stockholm he was not obliged to return in a hurry. During his stay he must also have been informed about his father’s death the preceding summer, if the news had not already reached him during his trip through Italy.

Åkerblad left Göttingen in April and arrived in Copenhagen in May.⁷³ He immediately met up with Friedrich Christian Carl Hinrich Münter (1761–1830). Münter corresponded with many European authorities on oriental matters. He went to Rome in the mid-1780s, arriving just after Åkerblad had left for his first posting to Constantinople. He studied Coptic under the strict supervision of Stefano Borgia, who admonished him in a thunderous voice when he showed interest in things other than his assigned fragments of the Old Testament: “Copto, Copto, Munter mio!”⁷⁴ Münter became a professor and eventually a bishop. He published widely on a range of disciplines and was a key figure in Danish cultural life until his death in 1830. Åkerblad would later befriend Münter’s sister in Rome, the writer Friederike Brun.

Åkerblad and Münter had many interests in common; one of them was coins. Münter communicated his new acquisitions to their acquaintance Tychsen in Rostock: “He [Åkerblad] brings an excellent collection of old coins, from which a few doublets have wandered into my cases.”⁷⁵

It is possible to follow Åkerblad’s activities over the next few years not only in his letters to Münter but also in Münter’s correspondence. Immediately after their meeting in Copenhagen in May, Münter wrote to several friends about Åkerblad’s special capacities.⁷⁶ In a response to such a missive he received a letter from a colleague lamenting the lack of distinguished diplomats from his own nation: “Of all our diplomatists here in

⁷² Pers 20, 162, Archiv der Göttingen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

⁷³ Vat. lat., fol. 30r: “départ de Göttingen le 7 Avril; Avril; 2. Hamburg parti le 25, 26. Kiel parti le 29, Mai; 2. Copenhagen, 15. Helsingör, Helsingborg, 18. Jönköping, 19. Norrköping parti le 23, 24. Stockholm.”

⁷⁴ Münter to his father, 30 March 1785, Rome, in *Münter*, 1:62.

⁷⁵ Münter to Tychsen, 13 May 1800, Copenhagen, in *Münter*, 6:293; Münter to Becker, 13 May 1800, Copenhagen, in *Münter*, 5:41. The auction catalogue of Münter’s library, c. 14,000 volumes, gives an indication of his encyclopaedic interests. *Bibliotheca Münteriana sive Catalogus Librorum quos reliquit Fredericus Münter* (Copenhagen, 1830).

⁷⁶ E.g. Münter to the British orientalist William Ouseley 1769–1842, 22 July 1800, Copenhagen, in *Münter*, 6:73.

Lübeck there is not one that knows more than to read and write and the table of three."⁷⁷ The irony would not have escaped Åkerblad. He considered that his exceptional scholarly activities had been of no consequence to his diplomatic career after he had been appointed as interpreter. After two weeks with Münter, Åkerblad continued his trip to Stockholm leaving Helsingör on 15 May. He arrived in Stockholm on 24 May.

⁷⁷ Charles-François-Dominique de Villers to Münter, 3 August 1800, Lübeck, in *Münter*, 6:341.

CHAPTER TWELVE

FINAL YEAR IN SWEDEN

Åkerblad arrived in Stockholm without a position in the diplomatic service. He should not have been surprised to find that he was still unemployed. In a letter to Münter he hinted that he had been promised a position, but he was not sure where.¹

Åkerblad's father had died on 9 August 1799. As an inheritance was due Åkerblad could count on not having financial difficulties for some time.² But it was not his intention to stay in Sweden. After a few months in Stockholm he wrote to Münter explaining why he had given up trying to have his collections sent there: "As I did not think I would stay long here I have not tried to get my things from Italy sent here and I admit I would rather like to go and find them where they are than have them sent here, where it is impossible for me to anchor up for ever, even in my mind."³ Åkerblad added that he had not spoken about literature since he left Copenhagen and hoped that he could soon leave this Hyperborean region and see Münter again in May the following year.

Although he was not assigned a position, Åkerblad did obtain a small commission from the government. This time it was something more in line with his knowledge and aspirations. The superintendent of the royal collections, Carl Fredric Fredenheim, appointed Åkerblad to describe the Phoenician coins in the collections. After the death of Gustav III cultural activities at the Swedish court had become restricted, but Fredenheim did his best to enlarge the collections and also planned to catalogue them. Åkerblad's task was one of many pieces geared towards this grand plan. Åkerblad's handwritten catalogue never reached print although it certainly was intended to. Fredenheim died in 1803 and the royal collections subsequently lay dormant for several decades.

¹ JDÅ to Münter, 31 October 1800, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:1.

² Johan Åkerblad died a well-off man, the estate inventory's total is c. 11,000 rix-dollars. No information remains on how the estate was divided between the inheritors, i.e. his widow and children. 15 October 1799, pp. 613–50, E II A 1:2 : 326, Justitiekollegiet, Stockholm stads rådhusrätt, Stockholm City Archives.

³ JDÅ to Münter, 31 October 1800, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:2.

Åkerblad had problems compiling the catalogue. He wrote about his difficulties finding relevant publications in Sweden and asked for Münter's assistance. This was a sign of the lack of interest in oriental matters in Sweden. A few months later he commented: "I despair to make something reasonable out of it."⁴ Callmer believed Åkerblad's laments to the extent that he wrote that Åkerblad gave up and never finished the Phoenician coin description; not surprising, as it was never catalogued in the collections of the royal coin cabinet.⁵

The catalogue describes forty Phoenician coins and is dated 19 March 1801, only a few weeks after Åkerblad last wrote to Münter about it. The collection was small but still contained coins from many of the areas of Phoenician settlements, e.g. Spain, Sicily, Syria, Libya and Mauritania. However insignificant the catalogue may seem, it is difficult not to find it emblematic of Åkerblad's relationship with the Swedish state service. This was probably the only instance where his special antiquarian knowledge came into use. Fredenheim tried to secure Åkerblad a payment of 150 rix-dollars for his work but at the meeting when payment was finalised the king reduced the amount to 100 rix-dollars.⁶

But the "infernal" work with the Phoenician coins led Åkerblad to start working with another Phoenician text, one of the inscriptions Pococke had copied in Cyprus and that was now in Oxford. He wrote to Münter that his new essay would have to wait to be printed until he arrived in Paris later in 1801; he refrained from printing it in Sweden due to the cost and the lack of oriental typefaces.⁷

The lack of printing possibilities in Sweden was mentioned in the case of Åkerblad's teacher Aurivillius' difficulties in printing Arabic. In the forty-five years that had passed since Michaelis offered to print Aurivillius' Arabic texts in Germany, the situation in Sweden had improved little. It is worth remembering the truism that the possibility to print governed both individual careers and the status of universities and academies. In the larger political context the capacity to print in Arabic was important during the invasion of Egypt.

⁴ JDÅ to Münter, 21 November 1800, 10 February 1801, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:3–5.

⁵ *Callmer*, 202. Åkerblad, *Elenchus numorum Phoeniciorum aliorumque litteris peregrinis insignitorum Musei Regii Holmensis*, vol. 2, *Specialkataloger 1738–1922*, ATA D IX a, *Kungliga Myntkabinettet* [The Royal Coin Cabinet], Stockholm.

⁶ Fredenheim to the King, 27 October, vol. 338, *Överint skr till K Mt 1800–1*, SNA; The decision for disbursement 11 November 1801, vol. 33, *Konselj och kabinetsprot, Inrikes protokoll*, SNA.

⁷ JDÅ to Münter, 10 February 1801, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:5.

Interestingly, there is a discussion with Münster not only on the printing of oriental languages but also on whether it was advisable to publish in the less-read Scandinavian languages. Åkerblad chose to publish his short essay on the marble lion in Swedish in a Danish journal, and advised Münster to adopt a similar strategy. He argued that: "it seems to me that you should not hurry the publication of the German translation; when it is published everybody will read the translation and leave the Danish [version] aside."⁸

This could have been the pious thought of a journal publisher in any country with a language that was not widely spoken. Publishing on oriental matters in Swedish and Danish did not attract a large readership. Åkerblad's advice to Münster ended on a cautious note: "but it could be the case that I am wrong." Very possibly he was wrong. Silvestre de Sacy in his turn wrote to Münster and asked him to hurry the publication of the German translation as he found it too time-consuming to try to read Danish with the help of a dictionary.⁹ Åkerblad himself was compelled to publish his runic essay in French in order to reach a larger audience.

The difficulties faced by Scandinavian language publications in reaching an international readership were also confirmed in a long letter to Münster from the influential orientalist Abraham Hyacinthe Anquetil-Duperron (1731–1805) the following year. Anquetil-Duperron had received two of Münster's publications, one in German and one in Danish. He lamented the loss of Latin as *lingua franca* and the fact that publishing in multiple languages dispersed the efforts of scholars. Too many languages made the propagation of science difficult: "because of the language itself, which the others do not understand at all, so that it [the common knowledge] does not grow, that it languishes and ends up being lost to the foreigners of this country." He also added more prosaic reasons as to why it was difficult to access foreign publications: "Our Parisian booksellers, in the present moment, do not know anything but the production of the day, chemistry, botany; and the changes of fortunes [wars] hinders one from getting [research, discoveries] from faraway countries."¹⁰ Anquetil-Duperron belonged to an earlier generation that still partly published in Latin. He has been regarded as a proto anti-colonialist and cannot be presented as

⁸ JDÅ to Münster, 27 March 1801, Stockholm, in *Münster*, 5:6.

⁹ Sacy to Münster, 11 January 1802, Paris, in *Münster*, 6:176.

¹⁰ Anquetil-Duperron to Münster, 14 July 1801, Paris, in *Münster*, 5:17.

a language imperialist, but he knew that if you wanted to be read you had to publish in the widely-spoken European languages.

The never-ending wars also hindered the personal exchange of knowledge. In Åkerblad's last letter to Münter before he left Sweden he was not sure he would be able to meet Münter in Copenhagen: "I hope to be able to embrace you in the beginning of May in Copenhagen . . . but that supposes that the English leave the Sound."¹¹ The letter was written only a few days before the Battle of Copenhagen on 2 April 1801 when the British navy under Horatio Nelson defeated the Danish fleet.

After two months in Stockholm, Åkerblad wrote a petition in the form of a memorial to the king. It was different from his earlier demands for employment in the foreign service.¹² It was probably now clear to Åkerblad that Swedish interest in Turkey and the Eastern Mediterranean was over. To carve out a government position he would have to try to market his knowledge in a different way.

The background was Gustav III's Italian journey in the 1780s and the newly awakened interest in classical antiquities and art. Since the royal visit to Italy Sweden had employed an art agent in Rome. Between 1798 and 1802 the position was unoccupied, a fact Åkerblad exploited in his application. Åkerblad's memorial bears signs of careful arguing and editing. He later maintained that the memorial was written on the explicit demand of king Gustav IV Adolf and that the art agent position had been promised to him.¹³

Åkerblad had learned from his previous petitions and changed his strategy. The memorial was projected towards future service and only once mentioned his earlier adversities in foreign service. The memorial outlines the benefits of having a Swedish national in Rome, both to help the Swedish artists present there and to support Swedish trade. Åkerblad also assigns great importance to the need to acquire more artworks for the collections in Stockholm.

All through his application Åkerblad refers to his knowledge of Italy and the Mediterranean and how this would benefit cultural exchange as well as commerce. He has a range of concrete proposals for the tasks of such a

¹¹ JDÅ to Münter, 27 March 1801, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:6.

¹² Underdånigst Pro Memoria af J. D. Åkerblad, Stockholm 23 August 1800, Kongliga Museum, II Koncept, Äldre handlingar rörande Kongl. Museum 1790–1836, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

¹³ JDÅ to Engeström, 10 January 1811, Rome, Enskilda personer, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, 1809–1813, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, UD, SNA; JDÅ to Bergstedt, 13 August 1804, Paris, F 651 b, UUL.

consul and art agent in Rome but focuses in particular on the benefit for the Swedish arts: "The utility of such a position for the arts is so manifold that it alone could be the subject of an entire treatise." He was aware that many of the objects bought on the king's journey to Italy in the 1780s were copies, assemblages or outright fakes. He made clear that "knowledge, practice and selection are necessary to avoid being deceived."

Formally the memorial was addressed to the king, but he had certainly gained the support of Fredenheim before submitting it. Fredenheim had had many problems setting up the collection bought in Italy in a wing of the royal castle; art was not a priority during the tumultuous 1790s.¹⁴

The Royal Museum was instituted only a few months after King Gustav III's death in 1792. It opened in a ground-floor wing of the royal palace in Stockholm in late 1794. We do not know anything about the king's intention to create a public museum. It was Fredenheim who almost single-handedly managed to find the means and arrange the collection. The below painting exaggerates the size of the gallery and the sculptures (Figure 42). The museum was closed in 1866 and reopened in 1992.

Fredenheim wrote to the Swedish Chancellor Fredrik Sparre relating a conversation. Fredenheim was questioned about the museum: "what is all this good for?" and answered in a vein with which Åkerblad would have sympathized: "I hope we will never be so barbarian that we need to answer such a question, in that case the foreigners will answer it for us."¹⁵ Åkerblad and Fredenheim had much in common. Fredenheim was the first Swede to have undertaken systematic digging at the Forum Romanum, already in the 1780s. Åkerblad would follow in his tracks when he led excavations at the Forum in the 1810s.

But even if Åkerblad's memorial did not procure him a foreign posting it did have an effect. If we are to trust the accusations of the Swedish representative in Florence, Johan Claes Lagerswärd (1756–1836)—who was contemptuous about everything Åkerblad said or did—one of Åkerblad's many sins was to have refused the position of secretary at the Royal Museum in Stockholm.¹⁶ Lagerswärd wrote to someone who would have known if it was a lie, so his accusation might be regarded as trustworthy.

¹⁴ For the history of the museum and Fredenheim's efforts see: Anne-Marie Leander Touati, with contributions by Magnus Olausson, *Ancient Sculptures in the Royal Museum: The Eighteenth-century Collection in Stockholm*, vol. 1 (Stockholm: Swedish National Art Museums, 1998).

¹⁵ Fredenheim to Sparre, 22 August 1794, E 949, Börstorpsamlingen, SNA.

¹⁶ Johan Claes Lagerswärd to Engeström, 3 April 1810, Florence, no. 257, Ep E 10:8, KB.



Figure 42. Pehr Hilleström. The main gallery of the Royal Museum, c. 1796. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

In any case, Åkerblad's rejection is fully credible. It is difficult to imagine an offer that could have made him stay in Sweden.

The memorial offers an image of how Åkerblad modelled his own, close to ideal, existence in Italy and the Mediterranean. As he frankly wrote, the administration of the relationship between the Papal States and Sweden would not be time-consuming. The main aim was to further his scholarship:

What gains could be achieved for the sciences, if the King's agent in Rome himself possessed knowledge and eagerness for their propagation, combined with free time to explore the Roman treasures of learning, is easy to understand. Rome still holds untouched riches in almost all branches of learning. The devotees of Roman, Greek and Oriental literature derive the greatest benefits there.

False modesty was not one of Åkerblad fortes and he was again proposing that the state should support his scholarly activities, banking on the fact that his successes would bring benefits for Sweden. He often implied that such support was common in countries with a more established tradition of classical and oriental learning. However, a career akin to the free ideal

held by Åkerblad was never a given. It is easy to denigrate Sweden in this respect and Åkerblad sometimes did, but freedom to pursue only personal interests was something few scholars, if not of independent means, could permit themselves anywhere.

Åkerblad would not give up his idea of becoming the Swedish representative in Rome. His attempts to secure a position in Italy would later lead to fierce battles with both the Swedish envoy in Florence, and the Swedish consul in Rome.

Åkerblad spent the year 1800–1 in Stockholm as a private scholar. He did not have any official work other than the Phoenician coin catalogue. He visited the Stockholm Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, which was in a sorry state. He called it “our sad academy of *belles lettres*” and underlined its impoverished condition: “Our academy is lacking in funds, like all of us.”¹⁷ Åkerblad’s comparisons with the academies and societies he had visited on his voyages were not to Stockholm’s advantage. An Italian writer and later acquaintance of Åkerblad, Giuseppe Acerbi travelled in Scandinavia in 1798–99. He wrote acerbically about the Stockholm academies, underlining their poverty and the fact that they were ruled by nepotism and internal strife, mirroring Åkerblad’s comments. The Swedish government felt sufficiently insulted to make a diplomatic protest against Acerbi’s book.¹⁸

In 1802 Erik Bergstedt had published the first volume of his translation and adaptation of Lechevalier’s book on the Troad in Stockholm. Bergstedt had written very positively about Åkerblad’s scholarly merits in the book.¹⁹ In the same year Åkerblad published on a Phoenician inscription and his publication on the Rosetta stele made him instantly famous. Both Åkerblad and Bergstedt were proposed for election to the Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities at the same time in 1803.

The academy chose to elect Bergstedt at the meeting of 28 June 1803. Bergstedt got five votes, Åkerblad three.²⁰ Not all members of the academy were satisfied with the choice of Bergstedt and the president took the initiative to ask for royal permission to elect Åkerblad to one of the chairs

¹⁷ JDÅ to Münster, 10 February 1801, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:4.

¹⁸ Giuseppe Acerbi, *Travels through Sweden, Finland, and Lapland, to the North Cape, in the years 1798 and 1799*, 2 vols. (London, 1802), 1:102–5; DBI, 1:135.

¹⁹ Bergstedt, *Resa till Propontiden*, 1:85.

²⁰ Vitterhetsakademiens protokoll 1803, 28 June, 13 July, 1 November, Protokoll, 1800–5, Ämbetsarkivet 2, KVHAA; Henrik Schück, *Kgl. Vitterhets- historie- och antikvitetsakademien: dess förhistoria och historia*, 8 vols. (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1932–44), 7:136ff.

for foreign members. Permission was granted on the grounds of Åkerblad's "excellent scholarly merits" and on 13 July Åkerblad was elected as a foreign member. It was also decided that as soon as a Swedish chair was free Åkerblad would be moved from a foreign to a national chair. Instead of waiting for a Swedish chair to become available (upon the death of a member) Åkerblad was given a supplemental chair. According to the statutes of the academy there was no possibility of awarding a special chair but Åkerblad had promoters in the academy which made such an irregular solution possible.

Åkerblad was in The Hague and Paris when his election was discussed and decided, and someone surely informed him about the tortuous process. His election as a foreign member was duly reported in the *Magasin encyclopédique*.²¹ In Åkerblad's letter of thanks he excused himself for not having had time to write the customary inaugural address. This would have to wait until he was less occupied with official duties. He never did present the address, as he never returned to Sweden.

It would be easy to draw conclusions from the fact that Åkerblad was proposed as a foreign member and to consider it a sign of his estrangement from Swedish matters. In the history of the academy it is stated that Åkerblad did not participate in the work of the academy nor had any contact with it.²² However, Åkerblad did not altogether break contact. A couple of his dissertations published in Rome in the 1810s were sent to Stockholm and dedicated to the academy by him.²³

Åkerblad was already determined to return to Paris before he went to Stockholm. The attraction of the copies of the Rosetta inscription, the large collections of manuscripts—among them the Coptic manuscripts that he had worked on in Rome—and the prospect of more material coming out of Egypt made Paris the centre of his interests. In addition he knew that only Paris offered the opportunity to work with the foremost authorities in the area. With the paternal inheritance at his disposal he could also leave without being dependent on a salary from the state.

We know in retrospect that these were his final months in Stockholm and it is tempting to sum up Åkerblad's Swedish life in light of the fact

²¹ JDÅ to Vitterhetsakademien, 10 December 1803, Paris, E VII:1, 1777–1832, Brevserie 1, KVHAA; Vitterhetsakademiens protokoll, 2 January 1804, Protokoll 1800–5, Åmbetsarkivet 2, KVHAA. *Magasin encyclopédique* 9, t. 1 (1803), 504.

²² Schück, *Vitterhetsakademien*, 7:138.

²³ Åkerblad, *Lamina di piombo; Inscription phénicienne*, KVHAA library. It appears the dedications were made at the same time.

that he never returned. Did he himself have an idea that this self-imposed exile was to begin when he left Stockholm?

Åkerblad's departure from Sweden was an important step in his life but did not form a fundamental turning point, if such a moment can be identified at all. Turning points, or reversals of fortune in one's life, are in most cases only possible to construct in retrospect and then not by the person in question. Åkerblad still hoped to continue to work for the Swedish state and was again promised a position by the king when he left Stockholm.²⁴ But he also knew the questionable value of such promises which had been broken more than once in the past. The word was as good as the influence of the giver. The previous king had been murdered; Fredrik Sparre had been sidelined; Reuterholm was deposed. And what was the promise of the present king worth? But at least Åkerblad had permission to leave as he bid the king farewell before his departure for Paris. Åkerblad deposited his money with a protector and left Stockholm in June 1801. On his way to Paris he met with Münter in Copenhagen as promised.²⁵

²⁴ JDÅ to Münter, 31 October 1800, Stockholm, in *Münter*, 5:1; JDÅ to Rosenstein, 5 March 1802, Paris, Ep R 5, KB.

²⁵ JDÅ to Rosenstein, 5 March 1802, Paris, Ep R 5, KB; Gjörwell, *Brefväxling*, 6 vols. (Stockholm, 1798–1810), 1:243; Münter to Zoëga, 9 July 1801, Copenhagen, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*, letter 890.

PART THREE

READING EGYPTIAN: DECIPHERING THE ROSETTA INSCRIPTIONS

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

“I AM ALIVE ONLY IN PARIS”

Åkerblad was 38 years old when he arrived in Paris in 1801. For the first time in his life he was part of an environment that would produce a major breakthrough in historical and linguistic research. Åkerblad made an important contribution to the field but he spent only two months working with the copy of the Rosetta inscription before publishing his preliminary results, representing a short moment in his long scholarly life. Nevertheless, his work on the Egyptian language defined him as an international scholar and Egyptian issues would continue to interest him for the rest of his life. This section presents an account of Åkerblad's entire work with Egyptian language, scripts and geography until his last contribution to the debate in 1816.

Not continuing into the period when Egyptian scripts were deciphered avoids a common problem that arises in the literature. Describing historical events in a sequential order can create an artificial causal chain. It becomes tempting to refer to the decipherment as a 'story,' and not surprisingly there are several fictionalized accounts. The extraordinary scientific success of the decipherment has conditioned the way it is described.

The aim here is to describe both Åkerblad's role in the decipherment and its early stages. The narrative addresses a number of questions that have not been exhaustively treated in the literature, such as the concrete issues of production and distribution of reproductions of the inscription and the influences of European wars on scholarly exchange. Whilst Åkerblad's name features in every serious account of the decipherment due to his 1802 publication on the Rosetta inscription, his involvement during the 1810s in both the fields of Egyptian geographical studies and decipherment is largely unknown.

The way in which the hieroglyphs were first read is one of the most written about processes in the history of orientalism and language studies. Nonetheless, the decipherment is rarely contextualized within these disciplines. Most works have concentrated on the personalities and drama. Little is written about this early period of Egyptian studies in recent literature on 'orientalism.' Neither have the early stages of the decipherment been thoroughly investigated from a contemporary history of science

perspective. The wider spheres of both politics and geography are sometimes only vaguely referred to and Egypt itself has a tendency to disappear from the horizon. It is not only in the geographical sense that Egypt disappears. The use of words can also obliterate the Egyptian nature of the language. 'Decipherment' indicates a process which differs from reading and which may be unrelated to the content and the context of what is read. Here 'Egyptian' is used as the common identifier of the language, independent of which script was used to write it.

The bibliography on the decipherment is vast.¹ This large amount of both popular and academic writing on the topic distinguishes this area from that of Åkerblad's other interests. A comparison can be made with the specialist domains of Coptic and Phoenician studies. Anyone writing about this period of early Egyptology must consider which context to choose, try to avoid repeating old stories, and decide what contributions are new.

Åkerblad had long wished to return to Paris, and complained when being elsewhere: "I am alive only in Paris, here I am dead."² One of the reasons drawing him to Paris was the news about the discovery in Egypt of a stone inscribed in three different scripts. He wrote in October 1800 that he had known about the stone "for a long time." He described his frustration at not being able to work with the inscription: "I am more angry than ever for not having gone to Paris, even if it only was to get to know this monument a little earlier." He then introduced a theme that would become frequent in the history of the decipherment: "the savants in France do not appear to be in a hurry to communicate this rare monument to foreigners, maybe because they are seeking the vainglory of being the only ones to interpret the hieroglyphs."³ Åkerblad was right. Silvestre de Sacy wrote in his turn to Münster and excused himself: "I do not dare to give you a copy [of the Greek inscription] for fear that it would displease the Institut."⁴ Even before the Rosetta Stone was well-known the tone was set. The tortuous process of publication cannot, however, only be blamed on French weakness for vainglory.

¹ Extensive bibliographies can be found in the many titles especially on Jean-François Champollion, most complete: Jeannot Kettel, "Champollion le Jeune. Répertoire de bibliographie analytique 1806–1989," *Mémoires de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, n.s., 10 (1990); Alain Faure, *Champollion : Le savant déchiffre* (Paris: Fayard, 2004).

² JDÅ to Münster, 1 February 1803, The Hague, in *Münster*, 5:8.

³ JDÅ to Münster, 31 October 1800, Stockholm, in *Münster*, 5:1–2.

⁴ Sacy to Münster, 10 April 1801, Paris, in *Münster*, 6:175.

The Paris libraries were enriched with war booty from around Europe. In Åkerblad's case the oriental collections taken from Rome were of special interest. Paris also offered a large concentration of oriental scholars. The *École spéciale des langues orientales* had been established in March 1795 and gave the teaching of oriental languages an institutionalised form. In addition, as the political situation was less turbulent in 1801 than it had been during his last visit in 1794, many of the scholars that had taken refuge in the countryside had now returned to Paris.

Åkerblad's first activities when he arrived in the late summer of 1801 were to start working with Coptic manuscripts and prepare the dissertation which he had written in Stockholm while he was working with the Phoenician coins in the royal collections.

Since several scholars had already written about the inscription he titled his treatise *Inscriptionis Phœniciae Oxoniensis nova interpretatio* [A new interpretation of the Phoenician inscription in Oxford] (Figure 43).⁵ The treatise was printed at the Parisian governmental printing works, which had the typefaces lacking in Sweden. Many French orientalist complained about the difficulties of printing in Paris, but compared to Sweden the situation was immensely better.⁶ Typefaces confiscated at the Propaganda Fide in Rome were not only brought to Egypt but had also been taken to Paris. The impact the treatise had on the scholarly circle made it immediately clear that Åkerblad was someone to be reckoned with. Silvestre de Sacy, who wrote regularly about oriental matters in the *Magasin encyclopédique*, reviewed it. It was Sacy who had commented on Åkerblad's Greek costume in Paris in 1789; he was now professor at the *École spéciale des langues orientales*. Sacy was influential and his review showed that their respective areas of knowledge overlapped and that their ambitions were similar.⁷

⁵ Åkerblad, *Inscriptionis Phœniciae Oxoniensis*. The inscription is *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, no. 46.

⁶ Pascale Rabault, "Réseaux internationaux de l'orientalisme naissant. Le Magasin encyclopédique comme relais du savoir sur l'Orient," in *Aubin-Louis Millin et l'Allemagne: le Magasin encyclopédique, les lettres à Karl August Böttiger*, ed. Geneviève Espagne and Bénédicte Savoy (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005), 163.

⁷ *Magasin encyclopédique* 8, t. 5 (1802): 37–54; and separately Paris the same year. Surprisingly little is recently written about Sacy considering his large influence on oriental studies. Edward Said dedicates some pages to him in *Orientalism*, 123–30; Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and Their Enemies* (London, Allen Lane, 2006), 141–46. For short biographies on French (language) orientalist see: François Pouillon, ed., *Dictionnaire des orientalistes de langue française*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Karthala, 2010).

Alphabetum Phoenicum e tribus Inscriptionibus exutum?

	<i>Melitens.</i>	<i>Cypriæ</i>	<i>Atheniens.</i>		<i>Melitens.</i>	<i>Cypriæ</i>	<i>Atheniens.</i>
<i>Aleph</i>	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	<i>Lamed</i>	Ⲍ	Ⲍ	Ⲍ
<i>Beth</i>	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	Ⲃ	<i>Mem</i>	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ
<i>Gimel</i>	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	Ⲅ	<i>Nun</i>	Ⲇ	Ⲇ	Ⲇ
<i>Daleth</i>	Ⲇ	Ⲇ	Ⲇ	<i>Samech</i>	Ⲉ	Ⲉ	Ⲉ
<i>He</i>	Ⲉ	Ⲉ	Ⲉ	<i>Ain</i>	Ⲋ	Ⲋ	Ⲋ
<i>Vau</i>	Ⲋ	Ⲋ	Ⲋ	<i>Pi</i>	Ⲍ	Ⲍ	Ⲍ
<i>Lamin</i>	Ⲍ	Ⲍ	Ⲍ	<i>Tsade</i>	Ⲏ	Ⲏ	Ⲏ
<i>Keth</i>	Ⲏ	Ⲏ	Ⲏ	<i>Koph</i>	Ⲑ	Ⲑ	Ⲑ
<i>Teth</i>	Ⲑ	Ⲑ	Ⲑ	<i>Resch</i>	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	Ⲓ
<i>Iod</i>	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	Ⲓ	<i>Shin</i>	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ
<i>Caph</i>	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	Ⲕ	<i>Thau</i>	Ⲗ	Ⲗ	Ⲗ

Figure 43. Plate from Åkerblad's treatise on the Phoenician inscription from Kition in Cyprus. He identified different forms of the Phoenician letters from Malta [Melitens], Cyprus and Athens. UUL.

Åkerblad was now well-acquainted with Aubin-Louis Millin de Grandmaison (1759–1818), the industrious editor of the *Magasin encyclopédique*. Millin, as an editor, journalist, antiquary and archaeologist, was one of the central cultural figures in Paris. Most French, and many foreign, orientalist published articles in the journal and new literature on oriental matters was meticulously reported.⁸ Millin took a liking to Åkerblad and they remained in constant contact until Millin's death in 1818.

Åkerblad's treatise was reviewed by Münter, Tychsen and Millin as well as by anonymous reviewers in many journals.⁹ It was generally excellently received. However, what was not said in reviews was sometimes written in private letters. The professor Simone Assemani, whom Åkerblad knew from Padua, wrote to Sacy:

It is in addition quite humiliating for human ingenuity not to be able to read . . . three well formed lines, and now I have under my eyes seven readings and interpretations of this famous Phoenician inscription from Kition: that is of Barthelemy, Swinton, Hug, Fabricy, Åkerblad and yours, and I will add my own which will be the eighth.¹⁰

In spite of his irony Assemani could not avoid adding his own interpretation to the list. The fact that so many scholars wrote about the same inscription highlighted the extreme lack of Phoenician texts.

Åkerblad's work with Coptic manuscripts soon bore fruit. He found a new script in a tenth century manuscript from one of the monasteries in Wadi al-Natrun, between Cairo and Alexandria. Sacy immediately wrote to Münter: "[Åkerblad] discovered a Coptic cursive script different from the ordinary, and that can only be read by someone who is very instructed in this language, because one must guess most of the letters."¹¹ That Åkerblad's interest in almost unreadable scripts was alive and well was obvious from the plates he supplied to the article. Åkerblad's Coptic was very good

⁸ Alain Ruiz, "Autour du Magasin encyclopédique. Les amis et visiteurs germaniques d'Aubin-Louis Millin à Paris, de Thermidor à la Restauration," in Espagne, *Millin et l'Allemagne*. Of the orientalist contributions to the *Magasin encyclopédique* 46% were by French scholars, 24% by British, 19% by German and Austrian and 4% by Scandinavians, Dutch, Russian, Italians and from the "sphère orientale." Rabault, *Réseaux internationaux*, 177.

⁹ Münter, *Kjöbenhavnske lærde Efterretninger for Aar 1803*, 61–66; Tychsen, *Neueste kritische Nachrichten für das Jahr 1803*, 12–13. Millin, *Magasin encyclopédique* 8, t. 3 (1802): 273–74; *British Critic* 21 (1803): 698f.; *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* 2 (1805): cols. 745–49.

¹⁰ Simone Assemani to Sacy, 20 July 1803, Padua, fol. 71, MS 2375, Institut de France, Paris (hereafter I de F).

¹¹ Sacy to Münter, 11 January 1802, in *Münter*, 6:177.

but it is still impressive that he was able to interpret the writing. Åkerblad's extensive experience with scripts served well in such interpretative work; both knowledge of the language and experience of different types of writing were needed.

Åkerblad immediately published an article on his discovery in *Magasin encyclopédique* (Figure 44).¹² In his article he stated his conviction that knowledge of the Coptic language would be the key to interpreting the Rosetta inscription, voiced his disdain for boring religious texts, and hoped that manuscripts with different contents would soon become available:

I hope that more interesting and more instructive [manuscripts] than these gloomy martyrologies, liturgies, homilies, hymns etcetera will be found. . . . It is probable that in the convents in Egypt there are works of history, of science and other [areas] . . . In Rome I copied a fragment of a work on medicine that appeared to have been longer. Why should there not be others?¹³

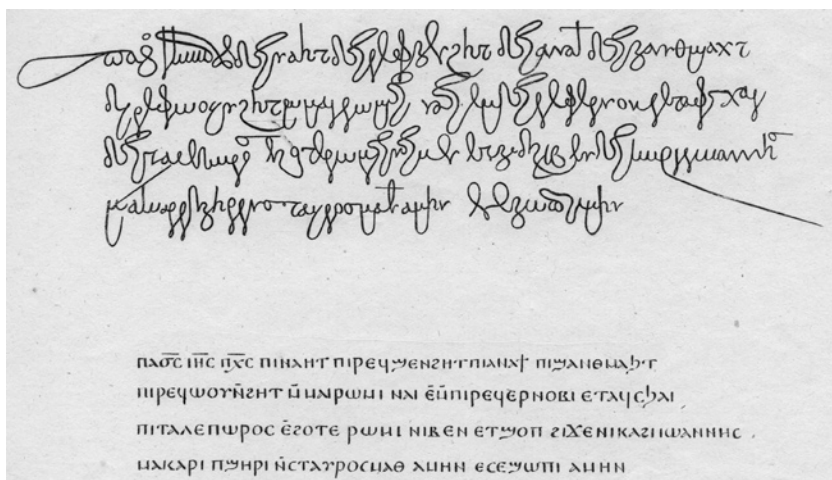


Figure 44. The cursive that Åkerblad discovered in one of the Coptic manuscripts taken from Rome by the French. Below Åkerblad's copy of the text is his transcription in Coptic. *Magasin encyclopédique* 7, t. 5 (1802). N72, KB.

¹² Åkerblad, "Lettre au C. Silvestre de Sacy sur la découverte de l'écriture cursive copte," *Magasin encyclopédique* 7, t. 5 (1802): 489–94. Dated 18 Nivôse an X (8 January 1802). The Coptic cursive is published in Henri Hyvernat, *Album de paléographie copte pour servir à l'introduction paléographique des Actes des Martyrs de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1888, repr. Osnabrück, 1972), plate 32.

¹³ Åkerblad, *Cursive copte*, 494.

The hope was that the French army and its team of scientists would bring manuscripts and material to Paris for the orientalist based there to work with. As was often the case, the dream of finding the epochal manuscript remained a mirage; few Coptic manuscripts of interest were taken in Egypt during the invasion. As mentioned above, Sacy commented that no one in the French invasion forces could read a single line of Coptic. The monasteries had been mined during the preceding centuries and only later would new material come to light, both through archaeological explorations and insistent pressure and coercion on the part of European collectors in Egypt.¹⁴

The Rosetta Stone

The Rosetta Stone was discovered in July 1799 outside Rashid [Rosetta] in the western Nile Delta (Figure 45). The French army had been cut off when the British fleet destroyed the French fleet at Abukir almost immediately after the invasion in 1798. Expecting attacks, the French army set about strengthening the coastal defences.

The restoration of a fort at Rashid was part of this defence scheme. During building works a slab of black stone with three different incised scripts was found. The officer in charge, Lieutenant Pierre Bouchard, immediately recognised its importance. Bouchard had previously worked with mapping and geographical surveys and was assigned to his new position by the same Gaspard Monge who had tried to recruit Åkerblad in Rome a year earlier. Bouchard's instant realisation that the stone was special may be taken as an indication of how widely diffused the idea was that parallel texts were necessary for a successful decipherment.¹⁵

The stone was taken to the local military headquarters, where the Greek part of the inscription was read. It was then understood that the different scripts contained the same text. There were two unreadable scripts on the stone: the hieroglyphs and the middle script which did not yet have a name. Efforts were made to find other pieces of the stone at the building site, but without success. The stone was then quickly taken to the French *Institut d'Égypte* in Cairo for further study.

¹⁴ Oleg V. Volkoff, *À la recherche de manuscrits en Égypte* (Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1970), 132ff.

¹⁵ Jean Leclant, "Le lieutenant Bouchard, l'Institut d'Égypte et la pierre de Rosette," *Bulletin de la Société française d'égyptologie* 146 (1999): 6–24.

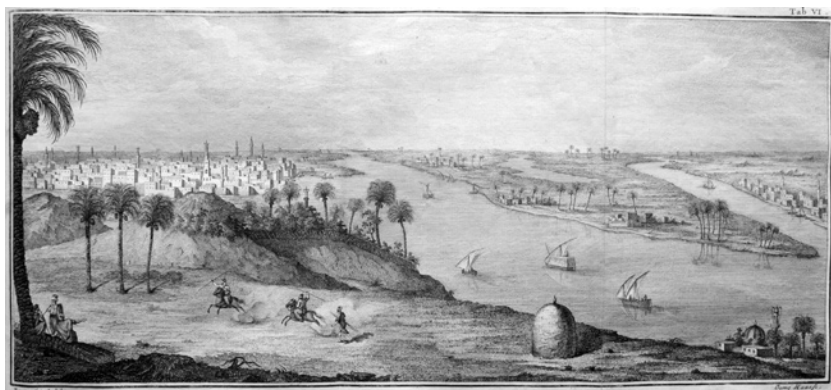


Figure 45. A view of Rashid, looking north. The Fort Qaitbay where the Rosetta Stone was found—or Fort Julien as the French called it—is c. 7 kilometres further down the river, close to the outlet of the Nile branch in the Mediterranean.
Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien*, 1: pl. 6. Photo author.

The text on the stone records an agreement, now usually called the *Decree of Memphis*, made in 196 BCE between a synod of Egyptian priests and the nominal ruler of Egypt, king Ptolemy V. It proclaimed that the decree was to be written in three scripts: first in hieroglyphs, then in what we now call Demotic, and lastly in Greek.¹⁶

The find was announced in the *Courier de l'Égypte*, the official organ of the *l'Armée d'Orient*, the occupying French army in Egypt. The *Courier* was used to communicate both French and foreign news, as well as to spread information on the campaigns in Egypt within the army. The journal was initially meant to appear every five days, but the intervals were usually longer, sometimes a month. The declaration of the find concluded: "This stone is of great interest to the study of hieroglyphic characters: maybe it will even at last provide the key."¹⁷ News of the find spread quickly.

The very same issue of the *Courier de l'Égypte* announced Napoleon's secret escape from Egypt to France. In time-honoured fashion it was declared that: "his absence should not cause worries either to the French or the Egyptians; all his actions aim at nothing but the happiness of both."

¹⁶ Dominique Valbelle and Jean Leclant, eds., *Le décret de Memphis : Colloque de la Fondation Singer-Polignac à l'occasion de la célébration du bicentenaire de la découverte de la Pierre de Rosette, Paris, 1er juin 1999* (Paris: Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1999).

¹⁷ *Courier de l'Égypte*, no. 37, 29 Fructidor, VII.^e année de la République (15 September 1799).

Napoleon was soon back in Paris planning the November coup that would make him first consul and eventually emperor of France. If anyone had had any doubts about the failure of the French invasion of Egypt these should now have been finally resolved. Napoleon's flight was confirmation of his army's defeat.

After France's final defeat in Egypt the stone and the French collections were ceded to the British as codified in the treaty of Alexandria of 1801. The French savants were upset at losing the results of their toils and described the barbarity of the British theft with vehemence: "Rather than allowing this iniquitous and vandalic spoliation we will scatter it [the collection] in the middle of the Libyan sands or throw it in the sea."¹⁸ Considering that the French had already looted Egypt themselves, it does appear somewhat unfair that the 'uncultured' Brits should be so accused. The officer in charge of bringing the stone to London on the frigate *l'Égyptienne*—a ship taken from the French—twisted the fact that they had taken the stone not from the Egyptians, but from the French, to British advantage, not without irony. He called it "a proud trophy of the arms of Britain . . . not plundered from defenceless inhabitants, but honourably acquired by the fortune of war."¹⁹ War booty was legitimate loot.

As previously mentioned there is a lack of documentation on the French invasion. Napoleon was eager to erase the records of the fiasco. He ordered the destruction of archival material that could shed light on the disastrous military campaign.²⁰ Napoleon's doctoring of the sources continued over the following years in Paris. Sacy had been given the task of translating a letter from the local governors in Cairo to Napoleon. He sent the printed letter to Münter but warned him that Napoleon had personally erased a phrase in the translation from the Arabic: "For a man of honour, a promise is a debt."²¹ Sacy implied that Napoleon did not want to be held accountable for the promises he had made in Egypt.

¹⁸ Louis Reybaud, *Histoire scientifique et militaire de l'expédition française en Égypte* . . . , 10 vols. (Paris 1830–36), 6:420.

¹⁹ Letter from Major General H. Turner, London 30 May 1810, in *Archaeologia* 16 (1812), 214.

²⁰ Laisuss, *L'Égypte, une aventure savante*, 557; Cole, *Napoleon's Egypt*, 245.

²¹ Sacy to Münter, 10 April 1801, Paris, in Münter, 6:175. *Lettre des membres du divan du Kaire au général Bonaparte, premier consul de la république française, en arabe et en français (traduite sur l'original par les citoyens Silvestre de Sacy et Jaubert)* (Paris, an XI, 1802/3).

1802–3: A Year of Peace

The manufacture and distribution of reproductions of the stone's inscriptions had a greater impact on the decipherment than is often acknowledged. The first reproductions of the stone were made in Cairo in January 1800 by Jean Joseph Marcel, head of the French Cairo printing works and member of the *Commission des sciences et des arts*. Marcel inked the stone and by rolling paper over it got an imprint, prints of which were then sent to Paris. They were handed over to the *Institut National*, the main institution for the promotion of science. This institute had been founded by the government in 1795 following the closing of the *ancien régime* academies during the Revolution.

Meanwhile the stone was removed by the British army and arrived in London in March 1802. It was first displayed at the premises of the antiquarian academy of Britain, the Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL). In the summer of 1803 it was moved to its permanent home at the British Museum. The society was expected to promote study of the stone, both in Britain and abroad. However, an anonymous observer in the *Gentleman's magazine* criticised SAL for being too slow in publishing its finds:

What shall we say to that procrastination in submitting the Rosetta inscription to the world at large, when the rest of Europe, from France to Sweden, are in the possession of exemplars, and have sent out elucidations? To what purpose send to the two Universities casts in plaster, to be locked up in cases, and delay the publication of the explanations already offered?²²

The French and Swedish elucidations referred to here were publications by Sacy and Åkerblad (treated below). So what had gone wrong according to the anonymous observer? Both the Minutes Books, recording SAL sessions which members were invited to attend, and the Council Books, recording SAL sessions when only the council was present, contain multiple references to the Rosetta Stone. The stone was one of the main issues at these meetings during the brief period it was housed by the Society.²³

²² *Gentleman's Magazine*, 9 February 1803, 105.

²³ The entries in the minute books, the protocols from the Society's public sessions (MB=Minute Books) are more frequent in the beginning when various members offer interpretations, speculations etc. while the later entries are predominately from the council meetings (CB=Council Books) minutes where decisions on the printing, publication and distribution of the plates are predominant: 1802; 11 March (MB), 1 April (MB), 8 April (CB), 8 April (MB), 29 April (CB), 29 April (MB), 6 May (MB), 8 July (CB), 4 November (MB), 11 November (MB), 18 November (MB), 25 November (MB), 2 December (MB), 3 November (CB), 9 December (MB), 16 December (MB), 23 December (MB), 1803; 13 January (MB),

The beginning of intensive Rosetta activity coincided with the Treaty of Amiens, the peace treaty between France and the United Kingdom finally agreed on 25 March 1802. The treaty marked the end of the Second Coalition; Britain and France had been at war since 1793. The wars had had a great impact on learned societies and their members. As soon as the peace treaty with France was signed, British travellers headed for Paris, which had effectively been off-limits since 1789. The difficulties of travel had radically changed conditions for antiquarian and intellectual pursuits. One history of SAL underlines the paradox of how a learned society could benefit from the fact that travel was restricted:

The Society, however, flourished during the years of war. If a man could not attend the salons of France or the academies of Italy, nor buy his engravings in Paris or Rome, there was the more reason why he should listen to the papers at Somerset House, turn over the drawings and the engravings in the Library, and study the *Archaeologia* and the *Vetusta Monumenta*.²⁴

The Society formed a five-man commission to oversee the production of plates of the Rosetta inscriptions in April 1802.²⁵ But the Society did not immediately proceed with publishing all three scripts. It started by making a plate of the Greek script which was completed at the beginning of July 1802; the Council ordered 1000 copies.²⁶ Plaster casts of the stone were also made, but these were sent only to the universities in Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh and Dublin. According to the minutes, the Greek plate was sent to those universities and institutions that usually received its publications. Given the importance of the stone the Society decided that an additional number of institutions and scholars should receive the plate.²⁷ The thank you letters that arrived from various parties were duly read and noted at subsequent meetings. Heyne sent a long letter where he

21 January (CB), 11 February (CB), 4 March (CB), 1 April (CB), 29 April (CB), 13 May (CB), 1 July (CB), 12 November (CB), 18 November (CB), 9 December (CB).

²⁴ Joan Evans, *A History of the Society of Antiquaries* (Oxford: Society of Antiquaries, 1956), 201.

²⁵ 29 April 1802, SAL Council Book. Payment was 15 guineas for the Greek part, 25 guineas for the Egyptian (Demotic) part and 35 guineas for the Hieroglyphic part. These figures indicate the variable degree of difficulties the different scripts were seen to present.

²⁶ 8 July 1802, SAL Council Book. The publishing date on the plate is 8 July and the sales price half a guinea.

²⁷ 8 July 1802, SAL Council Book. "To the: Vatican; Society de Propaganda Fide; Cardinal Borgia at Rome; Imperial Library at Vienna; Imperial Society at Petersburg; Academy at Berlin; National Institute; National Library at Paris; Royal Society of Antiquaries at Copenhagen; University at Upsal; Academy at Madrid; Royal Library at the Escorial; Academy of Sciences at Lisbon; Philosophical Society at Philadelphia; University at Leyden."

underlined how they still waited impatiently for the plates of the Egyptian inscriptions in Göttingen.²⁸ The list of recipients did not include Åkerblad in the first round, but soon the news about his Rosetta treatise reached London and it was later “ordered that impressions from the plate containing the Greek inscription, on the celebrated stone with three inscriptions be sent to . . . Mr. Akerblad at Paris . . . which had been overlooked in the former order of Council.”²⁹

The printing of the plates was a complicated process. Eventually the Demotic and hieroglyphic inscriptions were printed; the publishing date on the plates is 23 April 1803.³⁰ Only 500 impressions of the hieroglyphic and Demotic plates were ordered. However, these were not sent out to as many foreign scholars and institutions as the first reproduction. The minutes from 4 March 1803 state that all three plates were to be sent to Sacy in Paris as a gift but there are no lists with names of individuals or institutions which received the two Egyptian plates. An additional indication that the Egyptian plates were not sent out as widely as the Greek plate is that there are no thank you letters noted in the minutes.

By the beginning of 1803 it was obvious that it was becoming extremely difficult for France and Britain to adhere to the conditions of the treaty signed in Amiens. It is hard to believe that the distribution of the hieroglyphic and Demotic plates was not conditioned by the war. Although hostilities had not yet broken out, both parties noted breaches of the treaty. War started again in May 1803. This was the beginning of what we now call the Napoleonic Wars.

The first mention of the stone in the *Gentleman's Magazine* had reported the initial promise made by the French: “Bonaparte, to gratify the curiosity of the literati in every country, gave immediate orders to have the inscription engraved; after which, it will be submitted to the examination of the learned through Europe.”³¹ This promise was not kept and the French soon lost the stone to the British forces. But even so, they held on to the copies in Paris and did not print any more. As cited above, Sacy would not even send the Greek text to his colleague Münter in Copenhagen. There was an element of national pride and glory in every scientific

²⁸ 11 November 1802, SAL Minute Book. Heyne's long commentary was split into four sections and read on four separate occasions.

²⁹ 3 December 1802, SAL Council Book.

³⁰ The three plates were published in the *Vetusta Monumenta*, the Society's folio journal, but not until 1815.

³¹ *Gentleman's magazine*, suppl. 1801, 1194.

endeavour. The Society of Antiquaries' lack of interest in communicating the most interesting plates was a way of slowing down foreign scholars' work with the decipherment.

The radical difference in distribution pattern for the reproductions of the two Egyptian scripts as compared with the Greek plate has not been previously noted.³² Indeed, the British Museum Egyptologist Richard Parkinson has asserted that all the plates were sent out in the same way.³³ This led him to state recently that: "From 1822 onwards Egyptology had developed into a truly international arena of collaboration, continuing the spirit in which the first copies of the Rosetta Stone were circulated."³⁴ In the context of the Rosetta reproductions this statement is wrong. It is naïve to believe that normal conditions of scholarly competition were not influenced and exacerbated by war and political upheavals. The institutions in question, the societies, academies and institutes, were defending national glory and the domestic development of science.

There was a clear consensus on the importance of the plates of the Egyptian scripts within the community of oriental scholars. Tychsel underlined the necessity of involving more scholars to work with the inscriptions: "only when very precise reproductions are available of all the 3 inscriptions and more scholars can get to work on the task" could results be expected. Münter also exhorted the Society of Antiquaries to provide the learned world with reproductions.³⁵

The engravings of the Egyptian inscriptions were not sent to Åkerblad. He only received them through the intermediation of a superior in London. While working in The Hague he asked the Swedish minister in London to try to provide him with the whole series of three plates. The letter is dated mid-May 1803, just days before the formal outbreak of war between the United Kingdom and France: "please convey to the Mister

³² For a French perspective on the reproductions and the stone's 'material' history, but as previous contributions centred on the distribution and debate around the Greek plate, see: Bénédicte Savoy, "'Objet d'observation et d'intelligence.' La pierre de Rosette entre Paris, Londres, le Caire... et Göttingen (1799–1805)," *Études germaniques* 64 (2009): 799–819, repr. in *Les mondes coloniaux à Paris au XVIII^e siècle: Circulation et enchevêtrement des savoirs*, ed. Anja Bandau, Marcel Dorigny and Rebekka v. Mallinckrodt (Paris: Karthala, 2010).

³³ Richard Parkinson, *Cracking Codes: The Rosetta Stone and Decipherment* (London: British Museum, 1999), 22.

³⁴ Richard Parkinson, *The Rosetta Stone: British Museum Objects in Focus* (London: British Museum, 2005), 46.

³⁵ Tychsel to Sacy, 14 November 1802, Rostock, draft, MS Orient 284, Rostock University Library; Münter, *Kjöbenhavnske lærde Efterretninger for Aar 1803*, 175.

Secretary of the Royal Society how grateful I would be to receive a complete copy of the three inscriptions of the Rosetta monument.”³⁶

Åkerblad was confusing the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquarians; Champollion made the same error when he wrote to the president of the Royal Society in 1814. They were not aware that it was the Society of Antiquarians that had received the stone and was responsible for the reproductions. This is another sign that the Society of Antiquarians had problems communicating its role and competencies.

The stone’s inscriptions were not perfectly reproduced. Not surprisingly, the middle Demotic text was the one burdened with most difficulties. Representing hieroglyphs was somewhat easier; the shapes were recognizable and could be copied. But the Demotic text was wholly unknown and had to be visually copied, that is, by reproducing the shapes without knowing the signs or their significance.

The quality of copies is crucial to all decipherment work, something that was clear to Åkerblad and Champollion. In the 1810s Champollion had access to two reproductions but the differences between them left him with uncertainty:

They offer sometimes trifling differences but sometimes the [differences] are big enough to leave me in the most annoying uncertainty. May I ask the permission to beg the Royal Society to compare the passages on the enclosed sheet from the two engravings with the monument itself? It is most important for me to know the true reading, and I am convinced that I could already have established a reading of the whole inscription if I before my eyes had had a plaster cast.³⁷

Champollion did not know of the plaster casts which had been sent to British universities. He underlined that making and distributing such casts would be a “present given to the friends of learning [and] would be worthy of the zeal and disinterest that motivates the Royal Society.” Champollion used the word ‘disinterest’ in referring to the acts of a Society that should not consider wars and enmities between the two countries. When he wrote in 1814, Napoleon had recently fallen and the borders were expected to open up.

³⁶ JDÅ to Göran Silfverhielm, 17 May 1803, The Hague, no. 55, Ep S 16, KB.

³⁷ Champollion to the Président de la Société Royale de Londres, 10 November 1814, Grenoble, fol. 15, Add MS 21,026, BL. The letter is printed in Thomas Young, *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Thomas Young. . . vol. III. Hieroglyphical Essays and Correspondence, &c.*, ed. John Leitch (London, 1855), 62.

The recipient of his communication happened to be Thomas Young (1773–1829), the Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society, who had recently taken up his work with the Egyptian inscriptions. Young's draft answer is written on Champollion's letter. Champollion was not an assiduous archivist and much of the correspondence to him is lost. Young went to check on the stone exhibited in the British Museum—he complained about the bad daylight during winter—and answered Champollion:

In general, the [print] of the Society of Antiquaries seems almost perfect, even though the French copy sometimes is more exact, but in most of the passages you have cited there is some obscurity in the original traits that are a bit confused or worn-out and it is only by comparing the different parts of the stone that one can assure oneself of the true reading.³⁸

Nevertheless, Young continued in a dismissive tone and stated that the prints were good enough to work with: "In spite of these small differences those who will make the effort to study this inscription will find that both the copies are sufficiently exact to verify the sense of most of the words." Still, he answered Champollion's questions, which proved that Champollion had been right in his mistrust of the prints.³⁹

Ironically, Young himself was hindered by a mistake in a copy of a hieroglyphic inscription a few years later. The copyist had made an error and Young commented later that: "the artist has expressed the first letter of the name of Cleopatra by a T instead of a K." Young wrote with hindsight: "I suffered myself to be discouraged with respect to the application of my alphabet."⁴⁰ The early interpreters' quest for exactitude and accurate reproductions was not misplaced.

³⁸ Young to Champollion, no date, draft letter with many changes and cancellations on the above cited letter from Champollion, fol. 15, Add MS 21,026, BL. My reading is slightly different than in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 64.

³⁹ Champollion to Young, 9 May 1815, Grenoble, fol. 22, Add MS 21,026, BL; Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 65.

⁴⁰ Thomas Young, *An Account of some Recent Discoveries in Hieroglyphical Literature*. . . (London, 1823), 49.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ÅKERBLAD'S ROSETTA *LETTRE*

In Paris in 1802 Åkerblad continued his work with the Coptic manuscripts while Sacy worked with the Rosetta inscriptions from the print he had received from the *Institut National*. Sacy published his results in 1802.¹

Åkerblad followed Sacy's work on the Egyptian inscriptions and they often discussed it. Sacy himself had written a short note in response to Åkerblad's article on the Coptic cursive in the *Magasin encyclopédique* where he modestly explained that his work on the Rosetta inscription had not produced great results but that he would publish it anyway. Like Champollion later, Sacy was explicit on the problem of trying to understand which of all the copies was the best reproduction as they differed substantially: "where one notices, on the different copies I have seen, nothing but a confused blend of imprecise traits, which means that the printing has not been very successful."²

Sacy tried to identify the proper names in the Greek text in the Demotic inscription. A common idea was that the hieroglyphs represented a sacred or symbolic system of writing, in which case the best way to proceed was to start with the Demotic script and then in a second step work with the hieroglyphs. The Demotic inscription was also the least damaged of the three texts. Sacy managed to identify some of the names in the Demotic script. He did not, however, succeed in identifying and separating the signs in the names. He tried to find more names as well as certain common words but he was aware that his results were limited and wrote to Münster in Copenhagen:

On the subject of the Letter on the Egyptian Rosetta Inscription, do not imagine that it is a great discovery. The number of words I believed that I had deciphered is very small, and they are only names. And in addition, I might well have been wholly mistaken. That is the feeling of your friend Mr Akerblad who I often see about this matter.³

¹ Silvestre de Sacy, *Lettre au Citoyen Chaptal, Ministre de l'Intérieur, Membre de l'Institut national de sciences et arts, &c. au sujet de l'inscription égyptienne du monument trouvé a Rosette* (Paris, 1802), 47 pages, 2 plates.

² *Ibid.*, 8.

³ Sacy to Münster, 30 June 1802, Paris, in *Münster*, 6:177.

During their frequent meetings Sacy had understood that Åkerblad was not overly impressed with his results. According to Sacy, Åkerblad believed that he would achieve more. Sacy continued to explain to Münter:

He [Åkerblad] makes a great work on this inscription and if the results that he believes he has obtained are true, he will decipher close to the entire inscription. The work he has communicated to me has not yet convinced me, but it has shaken me greatly.

Millin noted Åkerblad's doubts about Sacy's work in his review of Sacy's *Lettre*: "A friend of mine, M. Ackerbladt . . . has also studied the Rosetta inscription. He thinks that he has been luckier than the C[itizen] Silvestre de Sacy and that he has discovered the alphabet."⁴ Sacy confirmed this in the letter to Münter: "Besides, if M. Akerblad is successful, I will console myself gladly and I will be the first to applaud him." It is doubtful how sincere Sacy actually was in applauding Åkerblad, particularly considering how he later treated Åkerblad's work. According to a German paper Åkerblad complained that Sacy only printed brief extracts from the inscription, implying that Sacy wanted to hinder other scholars' work.⁵ When Sacy gave up working on it he did, however, hand over one of the prints of the stone to Åkerblad. Sacy himself used Coptic as one of the main instruments in trying to read the Demotic text and knowing Åkerblad's prowess in Coptic and his interest in graphic riddles, Sacy thought that Åkerblad would be the person in Paris most likely to achieve more.

Åkerblad started to work on the print of the stone in the spring of 1802 and his *Lettre sur l'inscription égyptienne de Rosette, Adressée au C.^{en} Silvestre de Sacy*. . . was published in the autumn.⁶ Åkerblad recognized his debt to Sacy by thanking him profusely for the copy of the inscription and addressing his *Lettre* to him (Figure 46).

Åkerblad was explicit about the method he used; "it is the same as the illustrious Barthélemy followed to discover the Palmyrene alphabet."^[4] He also explained how knowledge of Coptic was the most important factor in trying to understand the inscription: "Coptic, a language that has

⁴ Millin, notice on Sacy's *Lettre au Citoyen Chaptal*, *Magasin encyclopédique* 8, t. 1 (1803): 427. See also Millin to Böttiger, 28 May 1802, Paris, in Espagne, *Millin et l'Allemagne*, 405.

⁵ "Ueber die zu Rosette gefundene Stein-Polyglotte, besoderns über die darauf befindliche Coptische Inschrift," *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, no. 4, 1802, viii. Review of Åkerblad's *Lettre*, cols. 561–67, 569–75.

⁶ Åkerblad, *Lettre sur l'inscription égyptienne de Rosette, Adressée au C.^{en} Silvestre de Sacy, Professeur de langue Arabe à l'école spéciale des langues Orientales vivantes, &c.* . . (Paris, 1802), 63 pages, 2 plates.

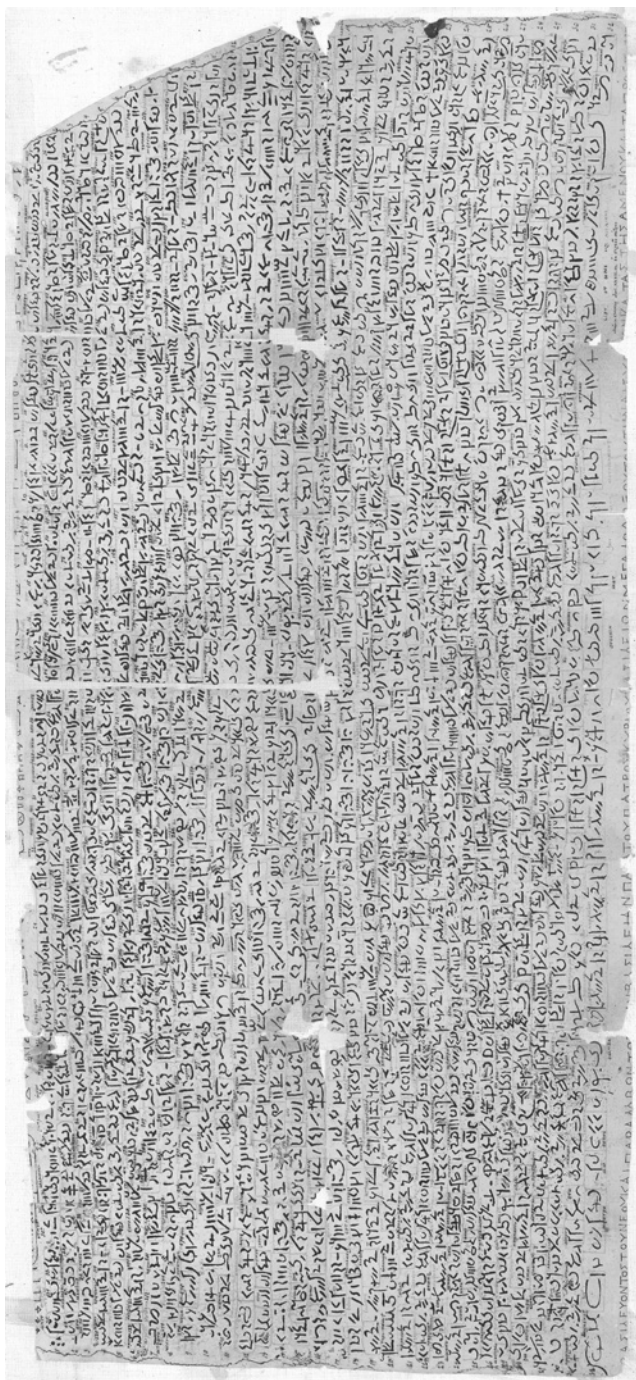


Figure 46. Åkerblad's print of the Demotic inscription. The size is c. 32 × 63 cm. It is not the one he worked with before publishing the *Lette*, but the version made by the Society of Antiquaries and sent to him while he was working in The Hague. As he remarked in a letter to Thomas Young the print is severely damaged by use. Åkerblad's method in approaching the text is discernable on the heavily annotated print. See also colour plates 22–24 for details of the print. N71a, KB.

served me as a torch in all this research.”[2] He underlined that even though Coptic was surely a successor of the language inscribed on the stone, caution must be exerted when using Coptic to explain the Demotic and that he had “always proceeded with the greatest circumspection in the application of Coptic words to groups of Egyptian [signs].”[40]

Despite many scholars' acceptance that the Egyptian language was the direct predecessor of Coptic, this was as yet unproven. According to Åkerblad, one of the main difficulties in understanding the inscription was lack of knowledge of Coptic. He explained that during his work with Coptic manuscripts in the Paris library, he had emended the standard dictionary: “I have enriched my copy of La Croze's dictionary with a great number of words that are missing . . . which already contains more than two thousand articles.”[53]

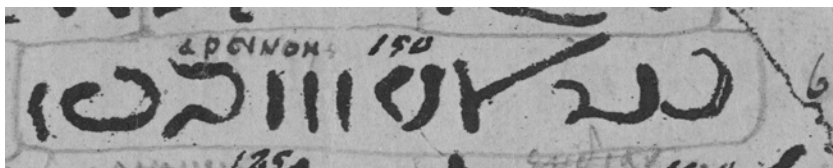
Åkerblad's dictionary consists of a box the size of a shoebox filled with bunches of cards ordered alphabetically with annotated Coptic words.⁷ In the *Lettre* he made numerous references to the Coptic manuscripts he had recently studied; nevertheless, he found “very often . . . Egyptian words whose meaning is determined by analogy with the Greek inscription, as well as by construction, that not were to be found in my collections.”[53]

The role of Coptic in deciphering the Rosetta Stone has been debated because of later observers' perception that Coptic led the researchers down false tracks.⁸ Åkerblad rightly stated that much caution had to be used when Egyptian words were proposed from the Coptic. However, his reading, or anybody else's for that matter, would have been impossible without a thorough knowledge of Coptic and a sense of how languages change over time. This was a capacity Åkerblad had perfected over several decades of intense language studies.

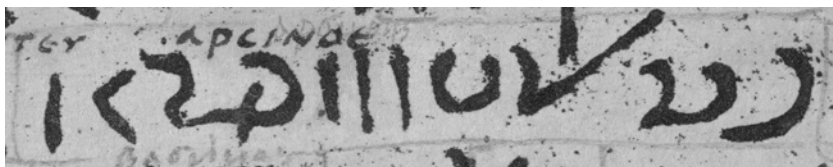
Åkerblad found several more names in the text than Sacy, who had identified a few names by inferring their position in the text. Many of the names appeared more than once in the text, which made it possible to understand their position. But more important than finding more names, Åkerblad could also prove that the names were written with alphabetic signs, something that Sacy had come to doubt (Figures 47a–e). Foreign names and some foreign words were written with alphabetic signs, which

⁷ N 71, KB.

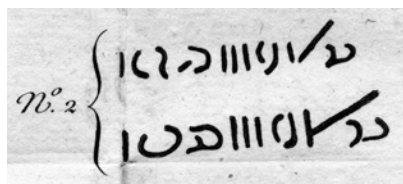
⁸ The main points of this debate are summarized by Maria Cramer in “Das Koptische und die Entzifferung der Hieroglyphen. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Koptologie in Europa,” *Oriens christianus* 37 (1953): 116–31. Maurice Pope also underlined the necessity of the Coptic knowledge on the part of the decipherers in *The Story of Decipherment: From Egyptian Hieroglyphs to Maya Script* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 36ff.



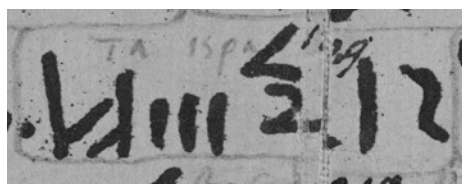
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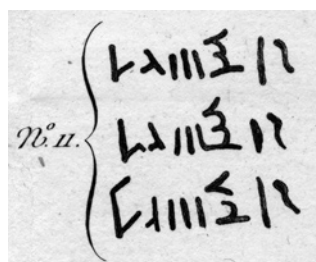
b



c



d



e

Figures 47a–e. Details from Åkerblad's Demotic work. Each line on the Demotic print (a, b, d) is approximately 8–12 mm high.

led Åkerblad to believe that the script was only alphabetic. He could also prove that certain letters in Coptic appeared to be directly derived from the Demotic.

When the Greek alphabet was introduced as a means of writing the Egyptian language some signs had to be added to express sounds that the Greek alphabet did not have letters for. One of these signs was the letter *fei* in Coptic: ϣ. Åkerblad knew from his Coptic studies that this letter represented the masculine personal pronoun in the third person singular, equivalent to English he/him. He showed that it had the same function in Demotic. He rightly suggested Demotic ancestry also for the letters *shei*, ϣ, *khei* ϣ, *hori* ϣ, *gangia* ϣ, *shima* ϣ and *dei* ϣ.⁹

Figures A and B are two instances of the name of the queen Arsinoë from Åkerblad's print of the Rosetta Stone. A is word number 150 on line 6, and B is found on line 24. Demotic is written from right to left and the first sign signifies a part of a cartouche, indicating that that the word is a royal name. The second sign from the right is the 'a' in Arsinoë, which can be compared with the first letter in Åkerblad's alphabet that he published in his *Lettre* (see figure 49). Figure C is a detail from plate 1 in Åkerblad's Rosetta *Lettre* reproducing two instances of Arsinoë (a detail from figure 48). Figure D is the word he identified as 'temple,' word number 189 on line 7. Figure E is a list of three instances of the word that he had found in the Demotic inscription, from the same plate as figure C. It is important to remember that Åkerblad worked with the imperfect print that was made by the French army in Egypt, and not the later print made by the Society of Antiquaries, which is reproduced here (see also colour plates 21–24).

Åkerblad proposed readings of other words that resembled Coptic: 'Egyptian,' 'temples,' the word 'amount/multitude,' here in adverbial form meaning much/a lot. He also gave an example of how the Demotic word for 'temple' in its turn had been taken up in Egyptian Arabic through Coptic, usually referring to the ruins of ancient Egypt. This is an example of how in addition to Coptic his knowledge of Arabic and its dialects also was an element in the difficult interpretative work. [39–44] The plate he supplied in the *Lettre* listed the words and grammatical elements he found in the inscription (Figure 48). His exposition made clear that it was not only

⁹ Sacy recognized the Coptic letters *gangia* ϣ and *dei* ϣ in the Demotic text but could not understand their value or function. Sacy, *Lettre au Citoyen Chaptal*, 42. The ancestry of *dei* ϣ has recently been debated: Rodolphe Kasser, "Aux origines des alphabets de l'Égypte copte : leur ti de forme si chrétienne leur est-il venu de Rome?" in *Das alte Ägypten und seine Nachbarn. Festschrift zum 65. Geburtstag von Helmut Satzinger; mit Beiträgen zur Ägyptologie, Koptologie, Nubiologie und Afrikanistik*, ed. Monika R. M. Hasitzka, Johannes Diebihart and Günther Dembski (Krems: Österreichisches Literaturforum, 2003).

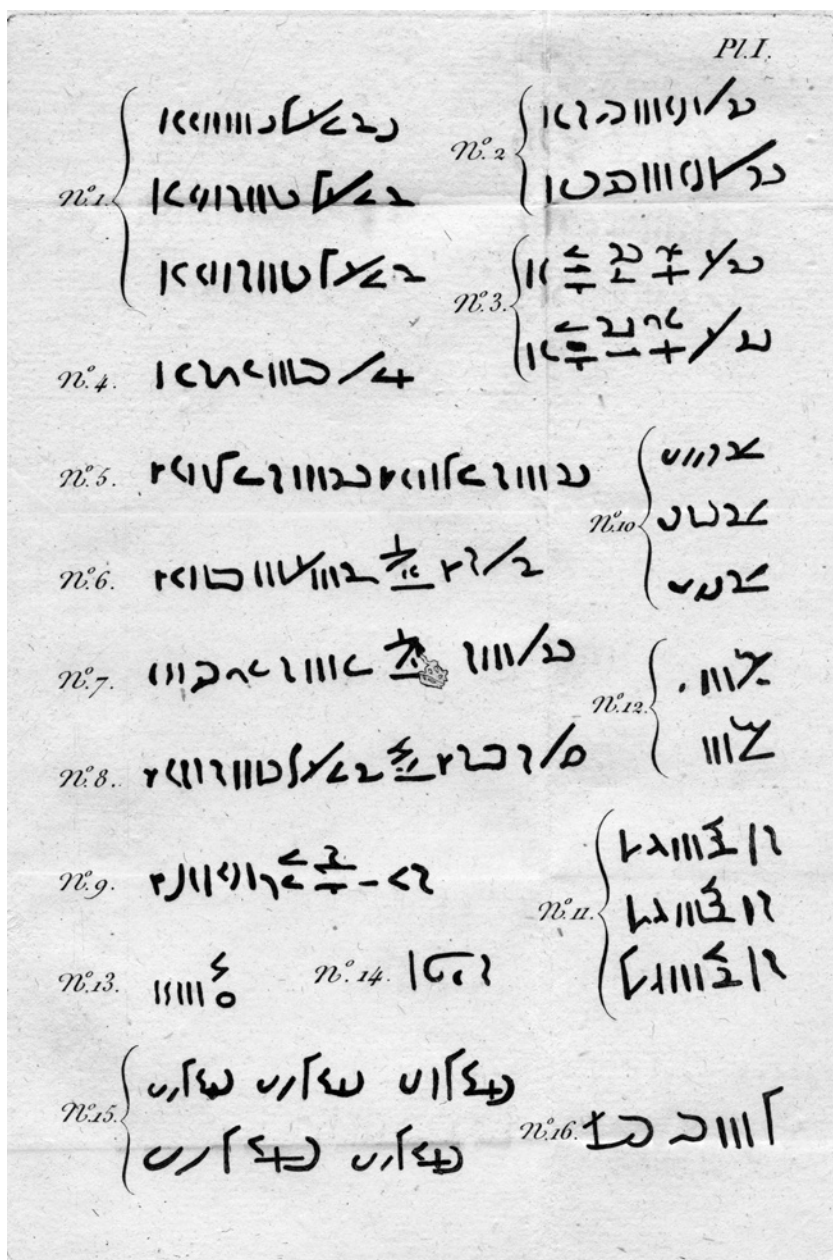


Figure 48. Pl. 1 from Åkerblad's *Lettre* listing the words he found in the Demotic inscription. UUL.

necessary to know Coptic vocabulary to try to understand the Egyptian text; grammar was the other key to understanding how the phrases were constructed and to hypothesize the order of the words.

Åkerblad proceeded sign by sign and tried to establish a Demotic alphabet (Figure 49). Out of the 29 letters he listed around half were an approximation to the value later given to the sign. Yet while Åkerblad's work was impressive, it was by no means a decipherment. In addition to trying to understand the value of the Demotic signs it was important for Åkerblad to show that ordinary words and not only names were written in alphabetic signs. By demonstrating the phonetic similarity between the words in the inscription and Coptic words that were not proper names Åkerblad proved, for the first time, that Coptic was a descendant of the language written in the Demotic inscription.

Åkerblad had concluded his two months of work on the inscriptions. In the introduction he made clear how little time he had dedicated to the inscription before publishing his letter. Åkerblad was less modest than Sacy in presenting his results and he did get further, but he was well aware that his contribution was only a starting point and declared that "much time is needed before my work on it will be finished." [3]

After Åkerblad's text Sacy appended a short reply to Åkerblad's dissertation (pp. 64–70) dated "Paris, 15 Messidor an 10, [4 Juillet 1802]," indicating that Åkerblad's text was finished by the end of June at the latest. Sacy's reply was vaguely positive but non-committal, as if he could not decide whether or not to support Åkerblad's results wholeheartedly. Sacy was not overtly optimistic that the Demotic inscription could be read.

It is often hard to understand the novelty of discoveries, especially after the knowledge has become common and a particular step in the process has been superseded. Åkerblad's contribution was only one of several important advances towards the reading of Egyptian. Yet, to sum up Åkerblad's achievement, we can conclude that he was the first person to read something in Demotic since knowledge of the script had been lost in antiquity. That is to say, he did not simply guess the value of letters or infer the meaning of words by their position in the text. Now the understanding was available to everyone, if they accepted Åkerblad's conclusions, that Coptic was Egyptian in a later form.

Åkerblad's dissertation was immediately recognized as a major contribution. His old friend Vilhoisson claimed in the *Moniteur universel* that "M. Akerblad . . . appears to have been born to unveil all the mysteries of

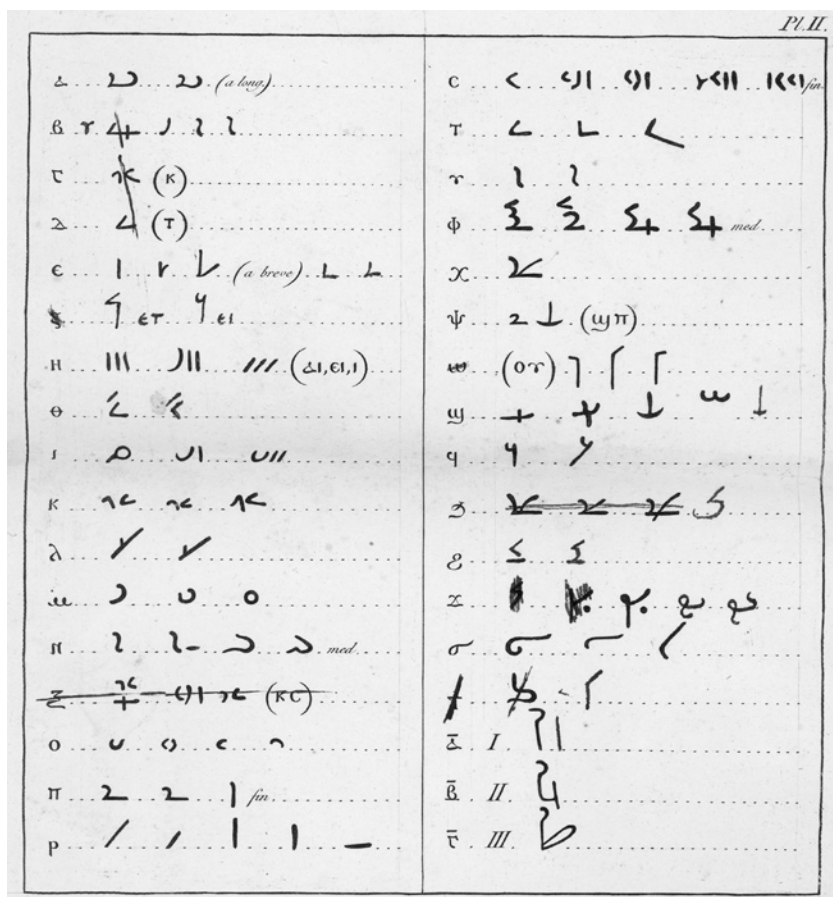


Figure 49. Pl. 2 from Åkerblad's *Lettre*. The left-hand column contains Coptic letters that Åkerblad thought corresponded to specific signs in the Demotic script. The three last signs are the numerals 1–3. This was the plate everybody referred to when later discussing Åkerblad's 'alphabet.' This is Åkerblad's own copy with changes and erasures post publication. It is another indication that he continued to work with the Rosetta inscription. N72, KB.

the Orient."¹⁰ The third tome of the *Magasin encyclopédique* published in the fall of 1802 was dedicated to him:

A
M. AKERBLAD,
SAVANT ORIENTALISTE,
RESTITUTEUR
DE L'ALPHABET ÆGYPTIEN;
HOMMAGE
D'ESTIME ET D'AMITIÉ.¹¹

News about Sacy's and Åkerblad's publications spread quickly. Tychsen, Åkerblad's acquaintance in Rostock, had read Villoison's notice in *Le Moniteur* and ordered the *Lettre*. He wrote to Sacy in Paris in the belief that Åkerblad had come further in his work than was the case.¹² When Tychsen received Åkerblad's treatise he became less enthusiastic. He wrote to Münter in Copenhagen on both Sacy's and Åkerblad's *Lettres*: "The first [Sacy] had the material in his hands long enough, without getting anything from it, the second [Åkerblad] has done his job better but the most important remains to be done."¹³ The fact that Sacy had had the print of the inscriptions for over a year without achieving any real results appeared strange to Tychsen.

The *Lettres* of Sacy and Åkerblad were discussed in all learned circles. Villoison published extensive notes on Åkerblad's publication, as he also did on Åkerblad's essay on the marble lions in Venice. This time Villoison did not limit himself to one instalment but wrote three substantial articles that were published in the *Magasin encyclopédique*, all in all almost one hundred pages. He addressed Åkerblad with a title from antiquity: "You have acquired sacred rights, my dear Hierophant, you are the true *Œdipus Ægyptiacus*."¹⁴ The hierophant was the chief of the Eleusinian cults who chanted explanations of sacred symbols during the celebration of

¹⁰ *Le Moniteur universel*, no. 18, 18 Vendémiaire an 11 (10 October 1802), 68.

¹¹ *Magasin encyclopédique* 8, t. 3 (1802).

¹² Tychsen to Sacy, 14 November 1802, Rostock, draft, MS Orient 284, Rostock University Library.

¹³ Tychsen to Münter, 9 December 1802, Rostock, in *Münter*, 7:297.

¹⁴ *Œdipus Ægyptiacus* (Rome 1652–54) is the title of Athanasius Kircher's book on Egyptian scripts and history, it refers to the myth of Oedipus answering the riddle of the sphinx. Villoison's letters in *Magasin encyclopédique*: first: "Sur un passage de l'inscription grecque de Rosette," 8, t. 6 (1803): 70–85, dated 1 April 1803, supplement 378–79; second letter: "Sur l'inscription grecque de Rosette, sur le titre de DIEU donné aux payens et aux empereurs grecs chrétiens, et sur l'ancienneté du grec vulgaire," 9, t. 2 (1803): 174–214, dated 2 June 1803; third letter: "Sur l'inscription grecque de Rosette, et sur les Fêtes solennelles des

the mysteries. Pascale Rabault quotes Villoison's praise in her essay on orientalist work in the *Magasin encyclopédique* as indicative of the collaborative spirit reigning in Paris.¹⁵ Such spirit did exist, but it is easy to overestimate co-operation when looking at published works. It is true that contacts between many scholars were frequent but it is important to acknowledge that proof of contact is not sufficient proof of established cooperation. Rabault's perspective is Parisian and presupposes equality between the Parisian orientalists and their correspondents. Such equality is questionable, as Åkerblad's later experiences would prove. In this particular case Villoison's flattering style must also be factored in.

Gustav Knös (1773–1828), a Swedish orientalist studying in Paris at the time, was being tutored by Åkerblad in spoken Arabic. He reported in November 1802 about Åkerblad's successes in Paris:

Mr Royal Secretary Åkerblad . . . having here published *Lettre sur l'Inscription Egyptienne de Rosette* where he investigates the old Egyptian Alphabet, a work that gained Mr de Sacy's approval and that was called un Ouvrage étonnant by Mr Pougens, and that has been mentioned with the greatest praise by Mr de Villoison in the *Moniteur*.¹⁶

Åkerblad's Parisian life was not only filled with teaching Arabic and working with manuscripts and inscriptions. The Swedish artist Lars Jacob von Röök (1778–1867) wrote: "Among the acquaintances I acquired in Paris was Mr Åkerblad who took me to the tribunal in Palais Royal and to David, where I saw Bonaparte, portrayed at horse, when he was passing the Alps."¹⁷ That Åkerblad followed court proceedings is a sign of his interest in French politics.

Åkerblad also wrote petitions to Stockholm, where he again referred to the possibility of foreign employment: "something I surely would obtain."¹⁸ Eventually Åkerblad's prayers were answered and he was appointed legation secretary at the Swedish mission in The Hague. He was not pleased with this posting and wrote from Paris to his new superior in The Hague:

Égyptiens et des Grecs anciens et modernes, et sur le Dialecte Macédonien," 9, t. 2 (1803), 313–64, dated 15 June 1803. Quotation third letter, 313.

¹⁵ Rabault, *Réseaux internationaux*, 176.

¹⁶ Gustav Knös to Gjörrwell, 15 November 1802, Paris, in Gjörrwell, *Brefväxling*, 2:202–3.

¹⁷ Röök's diary from Paris September–October 1801 in *Ur svenska hofvets och aristokratiens lif: skildringar hemtade i arkiven på Säfstaholm och Eriksberg m.fl. enskilda och offentliga samlingar*, ed. Arvid Ahnfelt, 7 vols. (Stockholm, 1880–83), 1:28.

¹⁸ JDÅ to Rosenstein, 5 March 1802, Paris, Ep R 5, KB.

other considerations have made me hesitate for some time before accepting a post that forces me to abandon the literary research that has occupied me up till now, and that has given me some success, even before it is finished. But the advice of some friends, above all that of the respectable Mr Baron d'Ehrensward, has finally made me decide to sacrifice the literary vainglory for the eagerness to fulfill the intentions of the King.¹⁹

Åkerblad was honest with his new chief in The Hague; he accepted the position but made clear that he considered his literary endeavours extremely important. His *Rosetta Lettre* had just been published and to leave Paris equated to giving up further work with the inscriptions. It was not only Åkerblad who viewed his departure from Paris as detrimental to work on the Egyptian inscriptions. *Der neue Teutsche Merkur* underlined that Åkerblad's departure hindered the decipherment:

Mr Akerblad has to the regret of all his friends had to leave Paris because his court has appointed him as Legation Secretary in The Hague. This transfer is especially unpleasant as it has destroyed the hope that was had that Mr Akerblad would decipher the Egyptian [Demotic] part of the Rosetta inscription, which he had great hopes for if his stay in Paris had been extended.²⁰

The premonition expressed in the German paper would be proven right. Åkerblad was unable to continue his work. The next breakthroughs in the decipherment would be more than a decade in coming.

Åkerblad was on his way on 5 November and arrived in The Hague ten days later.²¹ When he arrived in the Netherlands it was in all effects a French client state, the Batavian Republic. While Åkerblad's superior was on leave during August and September 1803 Åkerblad was *chargé d'affaires*. He wrote frequent dispatches informing the court in Stockholm of military preparations and of rumours about troop movements and the intentions of the First Consul, Napoleon.²² War between France and the United Kingdom had only recently broken out again and the situation was unclear; would Napoleon venture to invade the British Isles? Åkerblad reported on activity at the shipyards; the country was teeming with

¹⁹ JDÅ to Gustaf Carl Fredrik Löwenhielm, 25 September 1802, Paris, Hollandica 1000, SNA. Ehrensward was the Swedish envoy in Paris.

²⁰ [G. F. Winckler], "Nachrichten aus Paris," 14 December 1802, *Der neue Teutsche Merkur* 1 (1803): 79. Hubert-Pascal Ameilhon was also hopeful about Åkerblad's possibilities: *Éclaircissements sur l'inscription grecque du monument trouvé a Rosette* (Paris, 1803), 119–20.

²¹ Itinerary in Vat. lat., fol. 69r.

²² JDÅ, dispatches from The Hague 1803, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 27 August, 3, 10, 17, 24 September, Hollandica 987, SNA.

military preparations. He wrote that the British fleet was constantly in sight from the Dutch coast, it even made occasional raids. Åkerblad also related news from England and the uprising in Ireland, as well as informing Stockholm on Dutch issues, but his most important task was to report on French activities. When new hostilities broke out Sweden's position was not yet clear.

Åkerblad spent time away from The Hague in the library at Leiden, one of the traditional European centres for oriental studies. Åkerblad copied and annotated what was considered to be the best existing manuscript of a work by the Arabic tenth-century geographer Ibn Ḥawqal. Åkerblad's *Notice de La Géographie d'Ibn Hauqal, Manuscrit Arabe de la Bibliothèque de Leyde*... was certainly destined for publication.²³ This unpublished manuscript is another example of Åkerblad's interest in geography and place names—he had promised to publish a work on Egyptian geography and history while working with the Coptic manuscripts in Paris.²⁴ Åkerblad's teacher Aurivillius was also interested in Arabic geographic writing and had planned to publish a work by the geographer Ibn al-Wardī. Åkerblad's interest in geographic treatises might also have been connected to travelling. Ibn Ḥawqal himself declared how the reading of travelogues in his youth both inspired his travelling and the writing of his book: "since my youth I have always had a strong fondness for reading travelogues; to understand how one country distinguishes itself from another, the differences in opinion in religious and scientific matters."²⁵ Åkerblad also worked with Samaritan texts, assisting Leiden scholars in cataloguing them. He was putting into practice the knowledge he had acquired during his contacts with Samaritans in Jaffa in 1788.²⁶

He wrote to Münter: "Since I arrived I have left all other affairs and solely occupied myself with Holland. Language, history, learning, art etcetera are so far objects of my investigations. I already speak Dutch fairly well, and

²³ N72, KB. Åkerblad's work might have been prompted by William Ouseley's translation of the same text from a Persian manuscript (London, 1800). Münter sent copies of Åkerblad's inscriptions, coins etc. to Ouseley. Münter to Ouseley, 22 July 1800; Ouseley to Münter, 20 October 1800, in *Münter*, 6:73f.

²⁴ Åkerblad, *Cursive copte*, 494.

²⁵ Ibn Ḥawqal, *Configuration de la terre*, transl. and intro. by J. H. Kramers and G. Wiet (Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, 1964), 2.

²⁶ Willem van Vloten, *Specimen philologicum continens descriptionem codicis Ms. Bibliothecae Lugduno-Batavae, partemque inde exceptam versionis Samaritano-Arabicae Penta-teuchi Mosaici* (Leiden, 1803), 30; Gesenius, *Scripturae linguaeque phoeniciae*, 1:80. See also 7 draft letters 1803–4 from Jona Willem te Water to Åkerblad, BPL 1188, Leiden University Library.

can write it in an emergency.”²⁷ The previous pattern of language acquisition was repeated once again. But in Åkerblad's opinion the Netherlands shared certain qualities with Sweden:

But I cannot stay here only with them [learning and arts etc.], the climate is horrible (and you know how important that is to me) and literature, at least in The Hague is not to be considered. There are several excellent scholars in Leiden, for example Wyttenbach, but they live without almost any contacts with the rest of the world and what comes out of Germany and France (let alone Italy etc.) becomes known here late, or remains completely unknown.²⁸

The field of oriental studies in Leiden was not thriving and the recent decade of wars had not improved the situation. Another correspondent of Münster's confirmed Åkerblad's language prowess in Holland: “he has in two months learnt the Dutch language enough to speak it and have read through all the Dutch classics.”²⁹

Åkerblad's comments on the Netherlands look similar to what he in other words wrote about Sweden, including the awful weather. In The Hague he had gotten word that his teacher in Rome, Zoëga, was considering leaving Italy for Denmark where he had been offered a professorship: “You say that Zoëga is leaving for Kiel, this is what Card. Borgia also writes from Rome, and even so I almost cannot believe it. If he really comes to Kiel I fear he will not stay for long.”³⁰ But Paris was Åkerblad's main goal and for once it seemed that his insistent petitions had succeeded. After less than a year in The Hague Åkerblad was appointed secretary at the Swedish mission in Paris.

By the middle of October 1803 Åkerblad was back in Paris.³¹ By now he had become a household name in the circle of orientalist and his *Rosetta Lettre* was widely known. Honours had been bestowed upon him while in The Hague. On 20 May 1803 he had been elected foreign correspondent of the *Institut National*, with “majorité absolue” as Vilhoison had

²⁷ JDÅ to Münster, 1 February 1803, The Hague, in *Münster*, 5:7.

²⁸ Ibid. Åkerblad had been recommended to the Swiss scholar Daniel Albert Wyttenbach (1746–1820) who had established himself in the Netherlands in the 1770s. Vilhoison to Wyttenbach, 3 November 1802, quoted in Joret, *D'Ansse de Vilhoison*, 458.

²⁹ Werner Karl Ludwig Ziegler to Münster, 30 March 1803, Rostock, in *Münster* 6:398.

³⁰ JDÅ to Münster, 1 February 1803, The Hague, in *Münster* 5:8.

³¹ JDÅ to Gustaf Löwenhielm, 31 October 1803, Paris, *Hollandica* 1001, SNA; *Le Moniteur universel*, no. 20, 20 Vendémiaire an 12, 81 (13 October 1803). He lived at rue Neuve de Mathurins no. 711. JDÅ to Thunberg, 29 June 1804, Paris, Y-Ö, XXXVIII, G 300 a–h, UUL.

immediately informed Åkerblad.³² Åkerblad was put in the third class of the institute's membership, *d'Histoire et de Littérature ancienne*, which incorporated most members from the abolished *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*.³³ Many of Åkerblad's acquaintances were also members, e.g. Villoison, Sacy and Anquetil-Duperron.

He was now a member of the most prestigious institution in France, and arguably in the whole of Europe, in his field. By coincidence or not, in May 1803 two other orientalists had been elected corresponding members to the *Institut*, the consul and sinologist Chrétien-Louis-Joseph de Guignes and the missionary and Sanskrit scholar Jean Philippe Bartolomeo Wessdin, often called Paolino. Together with Åkerblad they covered a great part of the Orient and for several years no other scholars with oriental specialities were elected.

Åkerblad's first weeks in Paris were pleasant. The Swedish minister in Paris was away consulting with the Swedish court that was travelling in Germany. Åkerblad wrote to his former superior in The Hague:

a happy arrangement that permits me to abandon myself to my taste for idleness or better put for those varied occupations of *dolce far niente* that are so attractive to me. I visit the libraries, the museums: I see my dear confrères at the institute, the learned you detest so much; I dine at Robert or at Beauvillier, and to finish my day in a dignified manner I often go to the Montansier theatre, which I as a good Turk prefer to all the others. Voilà! Mister Count, these are my serious pastimes since I arrived in Paris, and I hope to be able to continue for another few days.³⁴

Åkerblad's *dolce far niente* thus involved studying in libraries and museums; he used the term *confrères* for his fellow academicians signalling his new status as elected member of the *Institut*. The evenings were dedicated to dining and visiting the theatre—in this case the Théâtre Montansier in the Palais-Royal. The Montansier had a distinctively different repertoire from the plays Åkerblad had appreciated during his first stay in Constantinople.

³² Séance du Vendredi 30 Floréal an onze [20 May 1803], Registre des procès-verbaux de la Classe de Littérature et beaux arts Années XI, Archives E 74, I de F; JDÅ to unknown, 31 May 1803, The Hague, Waller MS, UUL. At the session of 26 August a letter of thanks from Åkerblad was read.

³³ The third class, after the reform of 1803 consisted of (maximum numbers): 40 members, 8 foreign associates and 60 correspondents. With the reform of the *Institut* after the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the monarchy Åkerblad was nominated *correspondant* of the re-established *Belles-Lettres* in 1816.

³⁴ JDÅ to Löwenhielm, 31 October 1803, Paris, Hollandica 1001, SNA

There were numerous orientalist activities in Paris in the first years of the century. Gustav Knös, Åkerblad's student of spoken Arabic, reported on the rich activities in the National Library: "In the same Library building in another part and on the ground floor Public lectures in the living Oriental languages are held by the Misters *Langlés, Silvestre de Sacy, d'Ansse de Villoison* and others."³⁵ Louis-Mathieu Langlés was one of the promoters and the first director of the *École spéciale des langues orientales*. Villoison taught Greek, a course that Åkerblad's friend Paul-Louis Courier was following.³⁶ Villoison was also in contact with Mouradgea d'Ohsson, who came to Paris in 1799 after having finally been recalled from Constantinople by the Swedish government.³⁷ Mouradgea's son Constantine, whose knowledge Åkerblad had commended all through his conflict with his father, was studying at the library. The library also proved to be an important home for Indian studies. The British orientalist Alexander Hamilton had gone to Paris after the peace of Amiens to study the library's Sanskrit collection. Like many Brits he was held prisoner in France when war broke out again. After appeals by fellow orientalists he was allowed to continue working and, among other things, teach Friedrich von Schlegel, whose influential *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* was mentioned above.

There was both an Arab and oriental community in Paris. Knös was also taught Arabic by an "Arab from Tunis" and when Champollion arrived in Paris in 1807 he wrote to his brother about the "Egypto-Oriental colony" he found there. Champollion was learning Coptic from a monk who had come to Paris with the French army returning from Egypt. Åkerblad certainly knew all the oriental language scholars, whether French or foreign.³⁸

Åkerblad also continued to pursue his Greek interests as well as seeing his "illustrious friend" Dominique Vivant Denon.³⁹ Napoleon had recently made Denon director of the *Musée central de la République* (soon to be

³⁵ Gustav Knös to Gjörwell, 15 November 1802, Paris, in Gjörwell, *Brefväxling*, 2:202.

³⁶ Robert Gaschet, *La jeunesse de Paul-Louis Courier: Étude anecdotique et critique sur sa vie et ses oeuvres de 1772 à 1812 d'après des documents inédits* (Paris: Hachette, 1911), 116.

³⁷ Joret, *D'Ansse de Villoison*, 446.

³⁸ Ziegler to Münter, 30 March 1803, Rostock, in Münter, 6:398. Ian Coller, *Arab France: Islam and the Making of Modern Europe, 1798–1831* (Berkeley: California UP, 2010); Hermine Hartleben, *Champollion: sein Leben und sein Werk*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1906), 1:82f.

³⁹ Quotation in Åkerblad, *Sur les noms coptes*, 364; JDÅ to Louise von Stolberg, 13 September 1811, Rome, in *Albany*, 112. E.g. letters to the scholar Jean François Boissonade de Fontarabie (1774–1857) and JDÅ's friendship with Friedrich Jakob Bast (1771–1811). JDÅ to Boissonade, 18 August 1804, Paris, tome I, A–E, Recueil de 1021 lettres à J.-F. Boissonade,

called *Musée Napoleon*, and what we now know as the *Louvre*). Åkerblad maintained contact with Sweden and was expediting several commissions for his friend Olof Swartz in Stockholm. He also assisted the Uppsala botany professor, and Linnaean disciple, Carl Peter Thunberg.⁴⁰

But the diplomatic work became ever more engrossing. When he wrote to Erik Bergstedt in the summer of 1804 the message was terse. The relationship between Sweden and France had worsened leading to an increasing workload for the mission personnel. Åkerblad's work had been put on hold:

I envy Mr Chancery Councillor [Bergstedt] his luck to be able to use all his time pursuing learned investigations, while I have the last two years been forced to interrupt all similar professions. The only thing I published since my return to Paris is a translation of a notice on the runic inscription in Venice.⁴¹

Diplomatic Breakdown and War

Sweden had remained neutral during the French revolutionary wars but the relationship between the two countries was steadily deteriorating. The Swedish king, Gustav IV Adolf, had been in Germany since the summer of 1803 to follow the events. The king participated personally in the negotiations leading up to Sweden's joining the Third Coalition against France and its client states in 1805.

The reasons for Sweden's entry into the Napoleonic wars are debated; it is safe to say that the king harboured a strong aversion to Napoleon. Rumours even had it that the king was under the influence of mystics who claimed that Napoleon was an incarnation of the beast of the Book of Revelation. Napoleon had in turn called Sweden a "third-rate power," much to the chagrin of Swedish diplomatic personnel.⁴² The Swedish king's dislike of Napoleonic rule was further fuelled by the execution of Count d'Enghien in March 1804. The latter was a prince of the Bourbon

MS 1551, Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de la Sorbonne, Paris; JDÅ to Courier, 21 June 1809, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:94;

⁴⁰ JDÅ to Swartz, 13 August 1804, KVA; JDÅ to Thunberg, 23 December 1803, Paris; 29 June 1804, Paris, Y-Ö, XXXVIII, G 300 a–h, UUL.

⁴¹ JDÅ to Bergstedt, 13 August 1804, Paris, F 651 b, UUL.

⁴² Herbert Lundh, *Gustaf IV Adolf och Sveriges utrikespolitik 1801–1804: Förhistorien till Sveriges deltagande i det tredje koalitionskriget mot Frankrike* (PhD diss., University of Uppsala, 1926); Carlsson, *Utrikespolitikens historia*, 86; Carl August Ehrensverd, SBL.

family who was accused of conspiring against Napoleon. The king reacted strongly and recalled his minister in protest against the execution. Åkerblad was left as *chargé d'affaires* at the mission in Paris with the task of reporting to the court in Germany. Åkerblad's dispatches were frequent, often daily.⁴³ He reported on rumours of imminent changes and in his dispatch of 20 May he could finally inform the Swedish government of Napoleon's plans to become emperor. Every sign of Napoleonic megalomania was duly reported. When he described the first consul's birthday celebrations Åkerblad laconically noted that the French calendar had been changed and the name Napoleon had replaced that of saint Roch.

As he had done in The Hague, Åkerblad reported on political and military events and gave accounts of the rumours that abounded in the French capital, often contradicting the most outrageous pieces of gossip. He spent considerable time following court proceedings against 'conspirateurs': "The trial of the accused in a conspiracy continues every day, and the affluence of the audience is so great that even in the early morning all the corridors are full."⁴⁴

In the dispatch of 17 August Åkerblad reported on an article published in *Le Moniteur* three days previously.⁴⁵ The article was an aggressive critique of the Swedish king and his policies, insulting the country, the monarch's character and his lack of understanding of international affairs. It was an unusually harsh attack. Åkerblad noted realistically: "As the said daily paper is published under the supervision of the government it would be in vain to complain against this diatribe through a ministerial memorandum" and asked for instructions from the court as to what measures should be taken in this "unpleasant circumstance." Åkerblad was nevertheless ordered to demand an explanation from the French government. The king decided to break diplomatic relations with France and by 3 September Åkerblad had received an order instructing him to leave Paris within six days and make his way to Stralsund.⁴⁶

A bizarre anecdote held that Napoleon and his family were deeply upset by the resistance of the Swedish king. According to a contemporary

⁴³ Koncept, 27 April, 24 May 1804, Kabinettet för utrikes brevväxlingen, SNA. Åkerblad's dispatches were 10 in May, 22 in June; 20 in July; 19 in August, and 4 until he left in mid September, Gallica 497, SNA.

⁴⁴ 30 May 1804, Gallica 497, SNA.

⁴⁵ *Le Moniteur universel*, 26 Thermidor an 12 (14 August 1804). The same article was published in *Journal de Paris*, 15 August.

⁴⁶ Draft of order to Åkerblad, 26 August 1804, Würzburg, B1B:86, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

witness Bonaparte went so far as to order the murder of Åkerblad, which he justified on the grounds that he was carrying compromising documents:

Gustav IV was again in the political focus because of his imprudent language after the proclamation of the Empire; one could hear Joséphine, in the paroxysm of her hurt pride, letting it be known that he could be dethroned and killed like his father [Gustav III]. A Swedish agent named Ackerblad would have to pay for his sovereign. He was an inoffensive old man, but he was found carrying compromising letters. Bonaparte's first order was to throw him in the Bicêtre [prison] and shoot him the same night, but both the *friend* and Fouché intervened and the poor man was put for a while in the Temple and let free after his papers were confiscated.⁴⁷

None of this happened but the tenor of the anecdote says something about the tension between France and the countries that opposed it. Ironically, Napoleon's wife Joséphine would be proven partly right. Gustav IV would be dethroned and die poor in exile. One of Napoleon's most talented army officers, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte would become Swedish king. Joséphine's grand-daughter married the Swedish crown prince and became Queen consort of Sweden and Norway.

Despite the king's orders, Åkerblad could not leave Paris immediately; he first had to deal with closing up the legation. Talleyrand, the foreign minister, was away and Åkerblad could not get his passport until he returned. It was not a pleasant situation to be in, but Åkerblad was actually requesting his passport from a *confrère*. Talleyrand was a member of the *Institut National*, in the same class as Åkerblad. While waiting for his passport, he sent a dispatch on 5 September seeking the king's permission to go to Italy instead of to Stralsund. On 11 September he received his passport from Talleyrand and he finally left Paris five days later.⁴⁸ *Le Moniteur* reported selectively on the French attack and the Swedish response to it, and only mentioned how the censorship of French news in Sweden was tightened without giving any explanations.⁴⁹

The passages above certainly offer an explanation as to why Åkerblad did not finish his announced task of deciphering the Demotic inscription.

⁴⁷ Leonce Pingaud, *Un agent secret sous la Révolution et l'empire : Le comte d'Antraigues*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Paris, 1894), 268. The anonymous source Pingaud quotes has other correct information about Åkerblad which at least indicates that the story is invented with some pretension of accuracy, 402f.

⁴⁸ Itinerary in Vat. lat., fol. 69r.

⁴⁹ *Le Moniteur universel*, 8 Vendémiaire an 13, p. 23 (30 September 1804), 15 Vendémiaire an 13, p. 47 (7 October 1804).

He had after all declared that he had only started his studies when he published his *Lettre*. The fact that he left Paris and was wholly occupied with his diplomatic work is a plausible reason for the silence during the first years. The war and breakdown in communications also slowed down scientific work. Åkerblad himself thought it odd that efforts towards the decipherment had stopped and he wrote in 1814 how: "the monument of Rosetta: a monument, which, at its first discovery, appeared to attract the attention of all the learned throughout Europe, and which has since been neglected in an inconceivable degree."⁵⁰ He was right that the Rosetta inscriptions had been neglected. Some articles and books were published in the meantime, but these efforts are now mostly regarded as curiosities and are rarely treated in accounts of the decipherment. No contribution that was based on serious linguistic scholarship appeared.⁵¹

The most obvious explanation for the pause in decipherment work is the Napoleonic wars. The congruence of the interruption in work on the Rosetta inscription with the dates of the wars is almost exact; nothing much happened from the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and France in 1803 to the final fall of Napoleon in 1815. The lack of functioning communications reduced the possibility of scholarly exchange. Scholars and institutions were less prone to share texts and findings over hostile borders; political differences even impeded communications within single countries. International exchange would prove to be necessary in the following stages of the decipherment. The Rosetta Stone was of paramount importance but without other texts, both Demotic and hieroglyphic, the decipherment would not have proceeded as quickly as it eventually did.

⁵⁰ Åkerblad, "VII. Extract of a second letter from Akerblad. Dated Rome, 31 January [1815]," in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816, 181–82. The original letter in French, fols. 1–10, Add MS 21,026, BL.

⁵¹ Iversen, *Myth of Egypt*; Cameron Allen, "The Predecessors of Champollion," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, n.s., 44, no. 5 (1960): 527–47; Pope, *Story of Decipherment*; Madeleine David, *Le débat sur les écritures et l'hieroglyphe aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles, et l'application de la notion de déchiffrement aux écritures mortes* (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1965), 117ff.

Table 2. Principal events in the decipherment

1798	Åkerblad invited to join the French invasion of Egypt while in Rome
1798	French invasion of Egypt
1798	Founding of French <i>Institut d'Égypte</i> in Cairo
1798	Destruction of French fleet at Abukir by the British fleet
1799	Rosetta Stone found
1801	Prints of Rosetta Stone circulated in the French orientalist community
1801	Treaty of Alexandria, end of French rule in Egypt
1801	Rosetta stele taken by the British
1801	First publications of the text of the Greek Rosetta inscription
1802	Translations of the Greek Rosetta inscription
1802	The Rosetta Stone arrives in London in February, deposited at Society of Antiquaries (SAL)
1802	Treaty of Amiens, peace between France and the United Kingdom
1802	Print of the Greek Rosetta inscription distributed by SAL
1802	Sacy: <i>Lettre au Citoyen Chaptal . . . au sujet de l'inscription égyptienne</i> . . .
1802	Åkerblad: <i>Lettre sur l'inscription égyptienne de Rosette</i> . . .
1802–5	Publications and comments on the work of Åkerblad, Sacy
1803–15	War between France and the United Kingdom
1803	Prints of the Demotic and Hieroglyph Rosetta inscriptions published by SAL
1803	Rosetta Stone moved to British Museum
1808	Quatremère: <i>Recherches critiques et historiques sur la langue et la littérature de l'Égypte</i>
1809	Early Champollion letters on the Demotic inscription etc.
1810–11	Åkerblad's geographic <i>Mémoire</i> read in Paris
1811	Champollion: <i>Introduction to L'Égypte sous les Pharaons</i> . . .
1811	Quatremère: <i>Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte</i> . . .
1812	Champollion's first letter to Åkerblad
1814	Champollion: <i>L'Égypte sous les Pharaons, ou Recherches sur la géographie</i> . . .
1814–15	End of Napoleonic rule
1814–16	Correspondence between Young, Sacy and Åkerblad
1815	Thomas Young publishes first part of the correspondence with Sacy and Åkerblad
1819	Death of Åkerblad
1821	Thomas Young publishes second part of the correspondence with Sacy and Åkerblad
1822	Champollion: <i>Lettre a M. Dacier</i> . . .
1824	Champollion: <i>Précis du système hiéroglyphique des anciens Égyptiens</i> . . .
1834	Publication of Åkerblad's geographic <i>Mémoire</i> in the <i>Journal Asiatique</i>

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

GEOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

After his departure from Paris Åkerblad lived in Rome in 1806–7 and continued his work on Egyptian geography.¹ During Åkerblad's first Italian years two French scholars had begun studying Coptic intensely. One was Étienne-Marc Quatremère (1782–1857).² The Quatremère family was Jansenist, a strict branch of Catholicism. His father had been executed in 1794 and Quatremère had gone into hiding with his mother. He remained a convinced royalist, like his teacher Sacy, with whom he studied Arabic. Their political opinions became an element of the later polemics of the 1810s. Interested in Egypt since his early youth, Quatremère's first book was *Recherches critiques et historiques sur la langue et la littérature de l'Égypte* published in 1808. Quatremère had worked with the same Coptic manuscripts as Åkerblad in the Paris library and made great efforts to analyse the history of several Coptic dialects. In this first work he showed "already all his talent, and it should be added for fairness sake, all his shortcomings."³ Quatremère became an outstanding language scholar but these first works are rather distinguished by their encyclopaedic knowledge.⁴ Like Åkerblad, Quatremère was acutely aware of the necessity of a better Coptic dictionary and announced in his 1808 book that he was compiling one. Like Åkerblad's dictionary, it was never finished.

Much has been written about Jean-François Champollion (1790–1832). He became obsessed with Egypt already during his childhood and decided that he would dedicate his life to the study of all things Egyptian. He understood early on that knowledge of Coptic was one of the necessary tools for deciphering Egyptian scripts. In August 1808 Champollion wrote to his older brother and study companion Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac

¹ Welcker, *Zoëga's leben*, 2:309.

² Biographical notices in Pouillon, *Dictionnaire des orientalistes*; Pierre Labrousse, ed., *Langues'O, 1795–1995: deux siècles d'histoire de l'École nationale des langues orientales* (Paris: Hervas, 1995), 79–82.

³ Jules Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, "Notice sur M. Etienne Quatremère," *Journal des Savants*, 1857, 711–12.

⁴ Hamilton, *Copts and the West*, 241–42, 247–48.

(1778–1867) commenting on a Demotic text.⁵ After stating that he first believed that he would never be able to read it, he continued: “After that I took Åkerblad’s alphabet. I compared it [with the Rosetta inscription] and I found 16 letters absolutely the same. I gave them the same value.”⁶ Champollion was referring to the Demotic alphabet that Åkerblad had printed as the end plate of his 1802 Rosetta *Lettre* (Figure 49 and plate 26). At an early stage Champollion recognised that Åkerblad had been onto something. Nevertheless, Champollion was not convinced of Åkerblad’s proficiency in Coptic. Champollion-Figeac recommended that his brother start to work with the Rosetta inscription and the younger brother answered in 1809:

You advise me to study the Rosetta inscription. It is exactly what I will begin with. . . . Besides, I know a precious anecdote that by itself obliges me to examine very scrupulously the work of our Swede. He confessed himself to the abbé de Tersan (from whom I heard it) that in spite of his alphabet and his successful discoveries he could not read even three words in the Egyptian inscription. . . . Everything must be started anew; this is what I am beginning to see.⁷

Champollion was often accused of being arrogant by his detractors; his harsh judgments have become emblematic titbits in all but the most hagiographic accounts of his life. He likewise wrote tersely on Quatremère, who was referenced with a nickname: “I do not at all fear Étienne Policarpe Quatremère. He is envious and nothing more than an egoist.”⁸

Åkerblad certainly understood Champollion’s obsession with language; the younger scholar wrote how Coptic took over his mind: “I do not do anything else but Coptic since our Easter holidays. I only dream about Coptic, Egyptian etc. . . . In the end I am so *Copt* that to amuse myself I translate everything that comes to my head into Coptic, I talk Coptic to myself (since no one can hear me).”⁹ Åkerblad experienced a similar mania with another language at the same time, in his case Aramaic: “since a month, goodbye Greek, antiquities, Coptic, society, amusements, I am not occupied with anything but Chaldean [Aramaic]. I well know it is a

⁵ Jean-François Champollion is called Champollion, while his older brother Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac is abbreviated as customary Champollion-Figeac.

⁶ Champollion to Champollion-Figeac, 30 August 1808, Paris, in Champollion, *Lettres à son frère. 1804–1818*, ed. Pierre Vaillant (Paris: l’Asiathèque, 1984), 8–9.

⁷ Champollion to Champollion-Figeac, 21 April 1809, Paris, *ibid.*, 26–27. Charles-Philippe Campion de Tersan 1736–1819.

⁸ Champollion to Champollion-Figeac, 2 April 1809, Paris, *ibid.*, 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

great folly, but what do you want, I have been carried away, and one does not become wise when one wants."¹⁰

Such immersion is of course not particular to language studies; similar obsessions are often noted in narratives on 'geniuses' and it is legitimate to ask whether such intensity has been made into a sign of later achievement rather than being a trait of scientific discoveries. The linguists Charles and Florence Voegelin discuss whether special personal traits are needed for successful decipherment and not surprisingly the conclusions are negative. Neither is it surprising that they conclude that profound linguistic ability is the most common characteristic of decipherers. Nevertheless, while describing the Egyptian decipherers the authors could not refrain from using national stereotypes; it is, however, hard to determine whether they used them ironically or not: "Champollion, in the French manner, was intense" and another of the protagonists, Thomas "Young, in the English manner, was broad gauged and eccentric."¹¹

It was clear to everyone involved that the methodology used in previous decipherments, and the rules outlined by Barthélemy when he managed to read both Palmyrene and Phoenician, were still valid. In 1714, well before Barthélemy, Leibniz had acknowledged that proper names were important for decipherment.¹² Sacy and Åkerblad first identified the foreign names in the Demotic inscription. Even if there was uncertainty as to what language the inscription was written in, it was a fair supposition that the sound of names would remain similar even in different languages; the same is valid for place-names. Geographical names can remain alike over long stretches of time and often even survive language changes of the local populations.

One of the questions for those engaged in trying to understand the Egyptian scripts was what one could investigate if the script was not readable. Åkerblad had already in 1802 announced a plan to write a geographical treatise based on his study of Coptic manuscripts:

I dedicated a few moments to peruse these tedious martyrologies where I once in a while find names of towns, of villages, of Egyptian nomes [administrative districts] and other remarks that could be interesting for the

¹⁰ JDÅ to Friederike Brun, 7 February 1810, Rome, fol. 147, NKS 1992, KBK.

¹¹ C. F. Voegelin and F. M. Voegelin, "Patterns of Discovery in the Decipherment of Different Types of Alphabets," *American Anthropologist*, n. s., 65, no. 6 (1963): 1237. See also Rosa Katz's bizarre but intriguing investigation on precocious philologists: *Philologische Frühbegabung* (Groningen: Wolters, 1957).

¹² Pope, *Story of Decipherment*, 95.

geography and history of the country. When I have finished this work I will assemble the most important results in a memorial, which I will have the honour to communicate to you [Sacy].¹³

Åkerblad had paid particular attention to both Coptic and Arabic sources on Egyptian geography; his work in Leiden with the Ibn Ḥawqal manuscript was another sign of this. Today when geography appears as a given element – at least as we believe that we know our planet in the physical sense – it might be difficult to perceive the extent to which geographical issues were matters of conjecture and hypothesis. Place-names and the actual location of places were very often unknown and before these were established, the link with written sources on the history of a particular location was impossible to ascertain. This is still an important area in classical studies and the debate on names and their location is flourishing. Classical sources for Egyptian history and geography were of the utmost importance when it was impossible to read ancient Egyptian sources. This was likewise true in the case of early Phoenician studies; an example above was when Åkerblad tried to make sense of the geography of Carthage with the help of historians and geographers from antiquity (p. 111). Before systematic archaeology began to unearth more Phoenician inscriptions most information on the Phoenicians was derived from Greek and Roman sources. The same was largely true for pre-decipherment Egyptology. The great difference in the Egyptian case was that there were also Coptic and Arabic sources to work with.

Knowledge of Egyptian geography had been greatly developed as a result of the French invasion; mapping is an important activity for any occupier. The study of Egyptian geography had a long history and the argument outlined here is not that Åkerblad, Quatremère, and Champollion were engaged *per se* in new or especially ground-breaking activities. Nevertheless, at this particular moment all three occupied themselves with Egyptian geography using Coptic and Arabic manuscripts. When most scholars seemed to despair about the possibilities of solving the puzzle of Egyptian scripts in the short term, other ways had to be tried to enlarge knowledge of Egypt.

Åkerblad was the first to make his geographic results public. He had established himself permanently in Rome in 1809. After ten years of travelling he had been reunited with his books and manuscripts which he had

¹³ Åkerblad, *Cursive copte*, 494.

left in Italy in 1799.¹⁴ Georg Zoëga had died the month before Åkerblad's return to Rome and his catalogue of Borgia's Coptic manuscript collection would be published posthumously only the following year. Nonetheless, it had already been printed and Åkerblad was able to use it in his Coptic studies.

Åkerblad had not published anything since 1803. Now he finally sat down and put his Egyptian and Coptic geographical essay together. He incorporated observations from his travels and the descriptions, especially of the Nile Delta and Alexandria, are testimonies to his visit to Egypt. He sent the essay to Sacy in Paris counting on the fact that it would be read at the *Institut National* (which was about to change name to *Impériale*) and then possibly published in some form in the transactions.¹⁵

The history of Åkerblad's *Mémoire. Sur les noms coptes de quelques villes et villages d'Égypte* is hard to follow. The results, however, are clear. Åkerblad's essay was only published in 1834 and his work was not recognised in the battles of Egyptian studies in the 1810s. Sacy explained in the introduction to Åkerblad's *Mémoire*, twenty-four years after receiving the manuscript, why he did not publish it after reading it at the *Institut*:

The memorial... is a work by Mr Akerblad that he sent me from Rome, many years ago, with the prayer that it should be read in the class of history and ancient literature at the Institute. I actually only read a part of this memorial there. I was later undecided what I should do with the work of my learned friend when the *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte* by Mr Étienne Quatremère were published.¹⁶

At the same time that Sacy received Åkerblad's *Mémoire*, his pupil Quatremère was occupied with a geographical work on Egypt that was published in two volumes in 1811–12.¹⁷ Sacy himself also had a stake in Egyptian geography at this moment; his annotated translation of 'Abd al-Lāṭif's (1160?–1231) important thirteenth-century description of Egypt

¹⁴ JDÅ to Courier, 21 June 1809, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:94.

¹⁵ The publications of the Paris academies had been infrequent during the years of revolution and war. It was only after the restoration and the reinstitution in 1816 of the *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* that oriental material was published again with regularity. Adrien Blanchet et al. eds., *Les travaux de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres : Histoire et inventaire des publications* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1947).

¹⁶ *Journal Asiatique*, 2nd ser., 13 (1834): 337–38.

¹⁷ Étienne Quatremère, *Mémoires géographiques et historiques sur l'Égypte, et sur quelques contrées voisines : Recueillis et extraits des manuscrits coptes, arabes, etc. de la bibl. impériale*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1811). The second volume was printed in 1812. Pouillon, *Dictionnaire des orientalistes*, 794.

was published in 1810.¹⁸ Sacy added various other sources on Egyptian history and geography to the translation and the edition has the character of a geographic encyclopaedia.

A Police Matter

The reception of Åkerblad's *Mémoire* was acknowledged at the meeting of the *Institut* held on 21 September 1810. Sacy read Åkerblad's entire *Mémoire* at three sessions in February 1811.¹⁹

But not only Åkerblad, Quatremère and Sacy were interested in Egyptian geography. Champollion had occupied himself with geographical studies but by late 1810 he had not yet finished his work. The announcement of Åkerblad's *Mémoire* at the *Institut* made Champollion-Figeac, who was then in Paris, realise that if his younger brother was to gain primacy of publication it was necessary to act quickly. Champollion-Figeac reported from Paris to his brother in Grenoble that Sacy had read a report on Åkerblad's *Mémoire* and urged him to hurry up and get his own work in print before he was overtaken by the competitors: "Everybody's eyes are turned to Egypt . . . Åkerblad is making attempts in your field . . . Sacy read his report on a memorial which treats Coptic names of Egyptian cities and villages yesterday; rush your print!"²⁰

The print Champollion-Figeac was referring to was his brother's work on Egyptian history and geography, eventually published in Paris in two volumes in 1814 as *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons, ou Recherches sur la géographie, la religion, la langue, les écritures et l'histoire de l'Égypte avant l'invasion de Cambyse*.

When Åkerblad's *Mémoire* was made public in Paris in September 1810 it was competing with the works of both Quatremère and Champollion. Champollion, who was preparing to print his work in Grenoble, had encountered the usual problems with printing various oriental characters. But as he now knew that both Quatremère and Åkerblad were working on the same subject he managed to get a kind of prospectus printed in 30 copies so that he would not lose primacy of publication to the others. He also had two extracts from the work printed before the entire work

¹⁸ 'Abd al-Latif, *Relation de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1810).

¹⁹ 21 September 1810; 11, 15 and 22 February 1811, *Registre des procès-verbaux de la Classe de Littérature et beaux arts*, Archives E 75, I de F.

²⁰ Champollion-Figeac to Champollion, probably 22 September 1810, in German and without reference in Hartleben, *Champollion*, 1:149.

appeared a few years later.²¹ This episode has become a *cause célèbre* in the histories on Champollion and it appears that he and his brother were lying about when the printing started. When the work appeared there were accusations that Champollion had plagiarised Quatremère.²²

Judging from Champollion's comment in his own geographical work it also appears that Sacy gave no further publicity to Åkerblad's work. The quotations from Åkerblad that Champollion made in his geographical work were all from the Rosetta *Lettre*.²³ But Champollion did what he could to get hold of Åkerblad's *Mémoire*. He wrote to a friend in Paris in January 1811 to ask for a delicate favour:

And now to a police matter. I count enough on your friendship to not be afraid to propose that you undertake the trade of the *spy*. It is the matter of finding out from Mr de Sacy (and without him noticing it) what is contained in a memorial that Mr. Akerblad has sent to the 3rd class of the Institute. . . . You hear how much it interests me, and how important it is for me to know how to behave in this matter.²⁴

Champollion was excluded from the information exchange. In the following years the climate would deteriorate further. Åkerblad himself found out that he had lost the publishing race because Quatremère's work was recognised and printed before his. It is of course difficult to compare the scope of Quatremère's two volumes with Åkerblad's shorter *Mémoire*, but Åkerblad himself had announced that his was only the beginning of a longer work: "this first part which only covers a part of Upper Egypt will soon be followed by two additional parts."²⁵ Sacy knew that Åkerblad had been unhappy about the affair and defended himself in the introduction to Åkerblad's *Mémoire* in 1834:

²¹ Champollion, *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons, ou Recherches sur la géographie, la religion, la langue, les écritures et l'histoire de l'Égypte avant l'invasion de Cambyse* (Grenoble, 1811). This off-print contained a short preface and 67 pages of text. The non-dated extracts were on *Memphis*, 31 pages and *Thèbes d'Égypte*, 24 pages.

²² Sacy's review was critical, *Magasin encyclopédique*, 1811, t. 3, 196–201. Faure, *Champollion*, 154ff.

²³ Champollion, *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons, ou Recherches sur la géographie, la religion, la langue, les écritures et l'histoire de l'Égypte avant l'invasion de Cambyse*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1814), 1:19, 22, 41, 105, 239; 2:196.

²⁴ Champollion to Jean-Antoine Saint-Martin, 3 January 1811, Grenoble, fol. 81, NAF 915, BNF. Champollion's correspondence is not comprehensively published and no inventory of it exists. Jeannot Kettel had the kindness to make available to me his: "Recherches sur les manuscrits laissés par Jean-François Champollion le Jeune (1790–1832). Sa correspondance," (master's thesis, Sorbonne, Paris, 1978).

²⁵ Åkerblad, *Sur les noms coptes*, 343.

I believed, at the time, it to be useless to give any publicity to Mr Åkerblad's memorial, he reproached me, not without justice, for having been the cause that Mr Quatremère pre-empted him. Since that time oriental erudition has lost Mr Åkerblad and I had lost sight of his handwritten memorial that had remained in my hands. . . . I thought it fitting to let the public have the pleasure to read it and to repair the involuntary wrong I was guilty of in regards to the author.²⁶

It is hard to take Sacy's belated excuse at face value. Sacy's 'useless' is telling. It was not useful for the promotion of his protégé Quatremère's work, and Åkerblad was effectively excluded from the debate. Sacy maintained that Quatremère had no knowledge that Åkerblad was working on almost exactly the same things.

Quatremère was hardly likely to make it known if he had used Åkerblad's work in his publication. Åkerblad had cited Quatremère in the *Mémoire* referring to his earlier "excellent work on the language and literature of Egypt," but Quatremère did not return the favour.²⁷ Åkerblad is, however, mentioned in Quatremère's book: he is said to have promised an explanation of the name of a village, but to never have published it. As a matter of fact Åkerblad had explained the etymology of the name of this location in his *Mémoire*: "[the etymology] is so clearly indicated in the Coptic word ⲧⲙⲛⲟⲣ , *village of Horus*."²⁸ It remains difficult to believe that Quatremère had had no access to Åkerblad's *Mémoire* before the printing of his own work was finalised, but to insert any corrections or changes from it would have meant recognising that Åkerblad had made his work public earlier than Quatremère. Nevertheless, when Sacy reviewed Quatremère's work in the *Magasin encyclopédique* he quoted Åkerblad and acknowledged the fact that Åkerblad's *Mémoire* predated Quatremère's book by "several months before the work of Mr Quatremère had appeared."²⁹ It appears Åkerblad did not know about Quatremère's involvement until later; in 1811 he sent him a treatise he had published in Rome the same year.³⁰ Champollion made Åkerblad aware of the Parisian 'intrigues' in 1812—if he did not already know.

One could maintain that this is just another example of a scholarly competition where the party with the lowest status and the weakest

²⁶ Ibid., 338.

²⁷ Ibid., 373f.

²⁸ Quatremère, *Mémoires géographiques*, 1:364; Åkerblad, *Sur les noms coptes*, 411.

²⁹ *Magasin encyclopédique*, 1811, t. 4, 185.

³⁰ Åkerblad, *Sopra due laminette*, dedicated to Quatremère in Åkerblad's hand in the Bayer. Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

promoters lost out. Åkerblad was in Rome and only followed events by mail. He could only hope that he would get accurate information from the inner circles of Parisian orientalism. He had been right when he had earlier striven to go to Paris; it was only there that things could be done. The issue was not only to have access to the material, such as the reproduction of the Rosetta inscription and the Coptic manuscripts, it was likewise essential to be part of the right circles; otherwise it was hard to publish.

The fears of Åkerblad's colleagues and friends that his work with the Rosetta inscription would stop when he left for Holland in 1803 proved well-founded; he never followed up on his first publication. Also, with regard to the *Mémoire*, the promised additional two parts never appeared. In his papers a few manuscript sheets remain of a continuation of the geographic *Mémoire* that treats the eastern Delta.³¹

Corresponding with Champollion

When Champollion began to work seriously with the Rosetta inscription and delved deeper into Coptic he started to revalue Åkerblad's work. He realised that Åkerblad might be of assistance in his Rosetta work. Champollion wrote to Åkerblad on 31 January 1812. Åkerblad responded immediately. Again it may be repeated that we have no original letters to Åkerblad. Champollion's letters are quoted from his often heavily edited drafts. Åkerblad started by thanking Champollion for two brochures; one of them was the introduction to *L'Égypte sous les Pharaons*. . . the other was Champollion's review of Zoëga's *Catalogus codicum Copticorum*. . . Champollion had reviewed Zoëga's catalogue and anthology of Coptic texts from the Borgia collection as soon as it arrived in Paris.

Champollion knew that Åkerblad had studied with Zoëga and worked with the catalogue. In the review Åkerblad found an almost verbatim repetition of his own lament about the lack of non-religious Coptic manuscripts in his article on the difficult Coptic cursive. Champollion referred to the same medical fragment that Åkerblad had written about and wished for more texts of a similar kind that could "furnish longer documents on

³¹ N72, KB. For Sacy and Åkerblad's exchange see my: "Silvestre de Sacy et J. D. Åkerblad: Compétition et coopération en égyptologie," in *Silvestre de Sacy et le projet européen d'une philologie orientaliste*, ed. Michel Espagne, Pascale Rabault and Nora Lafi (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2013).

the state of ancient Egypt in general.”³² Champollion knew Åkerblad’s earlier Coptic work.

Åkerblad wrote that he had not occupied himself with Egyptian issues for some time: “but unfortunately I have not occupied myself with Coptic for a long time, thus I foresee that my letters will be of no interest to you.”³³ This is exaggerated considering that it was less than two years since Åkerblad had sent his geographic *Mémoire* to the *Institut* in Paris. Champollion asked whether Åkerblad had made any modifications to his Egyptian alphabet. He answered:

To judge from the few words you cite in your Introduction it seems to me that you quite agree with me on the value of the consonants, while for the vowels one can do what one wants. Besides, there are many errors in my letter to Mr de Sacy, which was done in a hurry and before I received an exact copy of the Inscription.

Champollion had accepted several of Åkerblad’s proposed Demotic letters in his introduction to his geographical work. Champollion may have adopted Åkerblad’s solutions for the lack of anything better but his earlier mockery of Åkerblad’s efforts had disappeared. This was likely because he had progressed no further himself and he realised that Åkerblad’s *Lettre* was one of the necessary sources to use. Åkerblad still believed that the Demotic was purely alphabetic and could therefore not understand the value of many of the other signs. But neither could Champollion until 1822. Nevertheless, Åkerblad had worked with the inscription:

Since that time I have determined the value of a great number of words but as many groups of letters still are inexplicable to me I have not urged myself to publish my analysis of this monument [the Rosetta Stone], which anyway only could interest a very small number of persons.

If he had managed to interpret such a large amount of words from the Demotic inscription, why did he not try to publish something? One of the reasons was certainly that he felt unsure about his results. The work with the geographical *Mémoire* and its botched fortune had probably been a sobering experience. He now knew more than ever that to enter the Parisian inner circles of Egyptology and orientalism was not an easy matter.

³² Champollion, *Observations sur le catalogue des manuscrits coptes du Musée Borgia a Velletri, ouvrage posthume de George Zoega* (Paris 1811), 34. The review was also published in *Magasin encyclopédique*, 1811, t. 5, 284–317.

³³ JDÅ to Champollion, 26 February 1812, Rome, NAF 20357, BNF.

But Champollion persisted in sending more questions.³⁴ One of the reasons for the sometimes undervalued role assigned to Coptic in the decipherment is that many of the early scholars thought it to be more closely related to the older stages of the Egyptian language than was the case. Coptic is indeed closely related to the Egyptian used in the Rosetta Demotic inscription but the grammar of the older Egyptian language was quite different. Some of the scholars did not overestimate the similarities; Åkerblad was aware of the dangers of always trying to read Coptic words in the Egyptian and also knew that grammatical analysis was crucial for further understanding of both Demotic and hieroglyphs. In his 1802 *Lettre* he had warned that the greatest caution had to be exerted while trying to understand Egyptian words as related to Coptic. He now repeated this to Champollion.

The letters between Åkerblad and Champollion contain discussions on individual words and on the importance of understanding Coptic dialects. They quickly assumed a forthright tone and a few months later Champollion wrote to Åkerblad about the debacle over Quatremère's book, the same book that Åkerblad had to thank for the non-publication of his own geographical work. Quatremère had published a long supplement to his geographical two-volume survey; at least that is what the title indicates. In fact the pamphlet is a detailed critique of Champollion's *Introduction*, the offprint Champollion quickly had printed so as not to lose the publishing race with Quatremère.³⁵ Champollion explained to Åkerblad: "I do not intend to answer Mr Q's brochure. It is my principle to avoid literary quarrels. I will not hide from you that I have been very affected by the manner in which he has acted in my regard."³⁶

The polemics referred to by Champollion as 'literary quarrels' were fierce. Quatremère wrote, amongst many things, that Champollion's *Introduction* "did absolutely not contain anything new" and that an enthusiastic notice of it in *Le Moniteur* wrongly associated it to his own work.³⁷ Champollion also made clear to Åkerblad that his relationship with his former teacher Sacy was shaky and that Sacy had done all he could to favour only Quatremère. Champollion judged that Sacy and Quatremère were

³⁴ Champollion to JDÅ, draft, 1 April 1812, Grenoble, NAF 20357, BNF.

³⁵ Quatremère, *Observations sur quelques points de la géographie de l'Égypte, pour servir de supplément aux mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Égypte et sur quelques contrées voisines* (Paris, 1812), 73 pages.

³⁶ Champollion to JDÅ, draft, 17 September 1812, Grenoble, NAF 20357, BNF.

³⁷ Quatremère, *Observations sur quelques points*, 3.

part of the same coterie; he called Sacy “the rabbi” in addition to using Quatremère’s nickname of “Policarpe.” Champollion was out of favour with Sacy and there is probably no reason to believe that Åkerblad would have been spared similar treatment. Although it is admittedly attributing guilt by association, it is difficult to believe that Sacy and Quatremère behaved differently towards Åkerblad.

However, Champollion was not entirely open with Åkerblad. After receiving Åkerblad’s answers to his questions he believed he had identified Åkerblad’s errors. He wrote again to the friend that he had earlier asked to spy for him and procure him Åkerblad’s *Mémoire*: “This idea will always hinder the success of Åkerblad’s work and that of those that follow his errors . . . I have made sure not to point out to him the source of his incapacity.”³⁸ Champollion proceeded to order his friend to keep the strictest silence about his new results.

Champollion’s first comprehensive biographer, Hermine Hartleben (1846–1918), wrote that Åkerblad had been unfairly treated by Sacy and Young. While Champollion was travelling in Italy in the 1820s he visited Rome and met several of Åkerblad’s friends. He reported back to his brother about his Roman experiences. Champollion met with the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen who had talked about Åkerblad with him:

Maybe to avoid reminding his brother about a deplorable quarrel that his brother had had in 1816, with S. de Sacy about David Åkerblad, Champollion does not mention here the profound emotion he felt when he heard, in this [Thorvaldsen’s] very studio, about the Swedish orientalist’s and archaeologist’s multiple hardships, and whose ideas, on the Demotic decipherment, had been more correct than those of Sacy and especially those of Thomas Young. This one had with his bitter gibes caused the premature and very regrettable silence of Åkerblad, who succumbed in 1819 to his unmerited misfortunes.³⁹

Hartleben’s biography of Champollion is still in many ways the most comprehensive, but many of her quotations and statements are not referenced. This was reflected upon by a recent biographer, Alain Faure: “the oral testimonies collected by [Hartleben] . . . are often the only available sources on many points; but as they come from confirmed historians it is

³⁸ Champollion to Saint-Martin, 18 September 1814, Vif, fol. 105, NAF 9115, BNF.

³⁹ Champollion to Champollion-Figeac, Rome 16 March 1825, in *Lettres de Champollion le jeune. Tome premier. Lettres écrites d’Italie, recueillies et annotées par H. Hartleben* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1909), 189.

legitimate to use them after applying sound criticism.”⁴⁰ Hartleben’s comment on Champollion’s reaction in Rome appears trustworthy; it is also detailed enough to relate to a specific situation.

Champollion’s own difficult relationship with Sacy must be considered in terms of his assessment of Sacy’s behaviour. We cannot know if his treatment of Åkerblad influenced the latter’s decision to give up his studies of the Rosetta inscription. Nonetheless, this was the view of the Champollion brothers and in many respects it rings true. Åkerblad himself hints at something similar in a long letter to Thomas Young (treated below) where he explained why he had not continued his Egyptian work in 1802. “I felt no further inclination to continue an investigation in which nobody would have been interested after such a declaration from one of the most learned men [Sacy] in France.”⁴¹

We don’t know what the ‘bitter gibes’ of Young and Sacy consisted of. One suspects that it was not only Sacy’s lukewarm reception of Åkerblad’s *Lettre* that Champollion-Figeac had witnessed but something regarding Åkerblad’s later work as it happened in 1816.

While Åkerblad and Champollion were exchanging letters between Rome and Grenoble the political situation was about to change radically. In the spring of 1812 the largest European army to date was assembled. In June the *Grand Armée* of almost 700,000 men under Napoleon’s leadership invaded Russia. The Russian campaign soon turned into a catastrophe. Champollion’s last letter draft to Åkerblad is dated 20 January 1815. He excused himself for not writing earlier: “The political events that have followed one after another with such speed have deprived me of the pleasure of answering your most recent letter.”⁴² He also sent Åkerblad the two volumes of his *L’Égypte sous les Pharaons*... which had eventually been printed in 1814. At the time Champollion wrote this last letter Napoleon was exiled on Elba and France was being governed by the new king Louis XVIII, younger brother of the executed Louis XVI. Napoleon would leave Elba in little more than a month and soon the so-called ‘Hundred Days’ began.

⁴⁰ Faure, *Champollion*, 16.

⁴¹ JDÅ to Thomas Young, 31 January 1815, Add MS 21,026, BL. Quoted from Young’s published translation in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816, 181.

⁴² Champollion to JDÅ, draft, 20 January [1815], Grenoble, NAF 20357, BNF.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

EGYPTOLOGY AND ORIENTALISM

When Champollion called Åkerblad an orientalist in a letter of June 1812 Åkerblad retorted: “PS. Please, Monsieur, do not give me the title of orientalist which I do not deserve anymore than that of Hellenist or Turk. My sojourn in the Orient does not give me any right to take this title.”¹ This is hard to take seriously. Åkerblad was the only scholar involved in the intense Coptic and Egyptian language studies who had visited the Orient or Egypt. Champollion only went to Egypt after the decipherment in 1822, while Young, Quatremère and Sacy never left Europe. Åkerblad’s definition resembles the later and more famous traveller to Egypt Gustave Flaubert’s ironic quip: “Orientalist. A well-travelled man.”²

Åkerblad was of course an orientalist, particularly according to contemporary criteria and had already been defined as such for decades. The most obvious example is the dedication in the *Magasin encyclopédique* after the publication of his Rosetta *Lettre* in 1802: “Savant orientaliste, res-tituteur de l’alphabet Égyptien.”

Without entering into analysis of what ‘orientalist’ meant as a self-defining term for these scholars during the early nineteenth century, the concept needs to be discussed in relation to their Egyptian interests. The decades surrounding the year 1800 are the period traditionally seen as the foundation epoch of modern oriental studies, but early Egyptian studies are seldom discussed in the debate on orientalism. As recent literature has shown, this chronological assertion can be questioned. Oriental culture and languages had of course been an object of study—more or less systematically—for several centuries and the idea that the changes during these decades were so great as to warrant the introduction of a definition that upholds that the discipline changed radically is open for discussion. Nevertheless, it is true that activities intensified and were institutionalized to a larger extent, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, as was the case for many disciplines. Egyptology makes for an

¹ JDÅ to Champollion, 12 June 1812, Rome, NAF 20357, BNF.

² “Orientaliste” in *Le Dictionnaire des idées reçues*, published posthumously in 1913.

interesting case in this chronology, as its birth is often associated with the decipherment of the hieroglyphs in 1822.

It is difficult to write about early oriental studies without referring to Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism*. Said's book has been the centre of a thirty-year debate on what constitutes oriental studies and how oriental scholars interacted with other parts of society. Said claimed that oriental studies were a handmaiden discipline to European colonialism and that they were an integral part of Europe's quest for superiority. The images of the Orient that some orientalist scholars constructed have, according to Said, been greatly influential in forming the West's image of the 'East.' A large body of research in both the history of oriental studies, and in the historiography on the Near and Middle East, has deepened and nuanced the view on European interactions with the East. Parallel to this constantly expanding field the discussion on Said's work continues. Recently, both studies on the history of oriental studies and a survey of the debate in the wake of Said's book have fuelled further debate.³

When discussing oriental studies and Egypt, an important issue is where and how we define the geographical Orient. This is not only an issue when reflecting on the Saidian concept of orientalism but is also a thorny issue when trying to understand where and how the Orient is located in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. For the scholars treated here there is no doubt that when studying Egypt they are working in a firmly orientalist tradition.

Then as now, there is no consensus about the precise definition of the Orient or about what geographical area orientalism as a discipline covers. A few examples suffice to illustrate the point: Arab territories vs. Turkish/Ottoman lands; how Greece is sometimes seen as the Levant, sometimes as an integral part of a 'Western European' past. Is Egypt part of the Orient or does it belong, as some recent scholars have proposed, to an African cultural sphere?

Questioning the geographical definition of the Orient in the contemporary debate is one of the keys to breaking up a deceptively homogeneous concept of 'orientalism.' By defining an all-encompassing Orient, advocates of the concept as championed by Said have made a similar error to the one they accuse the 'orientalists' of. By accepting orientalism as defined in

³ The debate on Said's *Orientalism* constitutes a genre in itself; for an extensive bibliography see: Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism: Said and the Unsaid* (Seattle: Washington UP, 2007).

the post-Saidian debate, the Orient is reduced to a single ‘object of study.’ It never was, and by homogenising it, distinctions and particularities are erased. In addition to the application of Said’s orientalism critique on a difficultly defined Orient some authors have used the same framework to describe other types of ‘colonialism.’ An example discussed below—highly relevant to Åkerblad’s fifteen years in Italy—is Michael Broers’ study of the French occupation of Italy during the Napoleonic wars. Broers uses ‘orientalism’ as one of the concepts for explaining how the French authorities related to the subjugated Italians (see p. 297).

Said was of course not the first to connect oriental studies to colonialism and a schematic image of the eastern ‘other.’ East European historiography early associated the quest for oriental learning with European territorial expansion. Vera Tolz argues that Said was inspired by a Russian orientalist tradition through his contacts with Arab intellectuals who had studied in the Soviet Union. Recent studies on both tsarist and Soviet orientalism adds nuances to another empire’s interaction with its orient.⁴ If we admit that the orientalism debate is ripe for historical investigation, other schools of oriental studies need to be included in a wider discussion. While East European materialist studies might strike us formulaic, their main contentions are often similar to the theories of Said and his followers. In Åkerblad’s context a typical example of this historical tradition is a thesis on one of his correspondents, the Rostock orientalist G. O. Tychsen.⁵ It is written in a clearly materialist key within the East German historiographic tradition and offers insights into the workings of the learned exchange, and how the development of orientalism went hand in hand with European economic and colonial expansion. Another, extreme, example is Herbert Scurla who wrote in the early 1960s about four German travellers to the Orient, of which we have met Carsten Niebuhr. Scurla forcibly denied projecting expansionist designs onto their voyages: “The travellers that will be described in this selection were free from such intentions, like real sons of their time they exclusively served the

⁴ Vera Tolz, *Russia’s Own Orient*, 83, 100, 171–72; Schimmelpenninck, *Russian Orientalism*. See also contributions on Said’s sources of inspiration and reception in Germany: *Orient–Orientalistik–Orientalismus: Geschichte und Aktualität einer Debatte*, ed. Burkhard Schnepel, Gunnar Brands and Hanne Schöning (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2011).

⁵ Ramona French, “Oluf Gerhard Tychsen: Ein deutscher Orientalist des 18. Jahrhunderts: Eine Untersuchung seiner Korrespondenz als Beitrag zur Geschichte der Orientalistik” (PhD. diss., University of Rostock, 1984).

scientific quest for knowledge.”⁶ Scurla’s perspective mixes the Soviet bloc’s presumed colonial innocence with righteousness and national pride. If we are serious in our intentions to question the history of oriental studies we need to widen our field of inquiry.

Questioning some of Said’s assertions does not mean denying the validity of many of his perspectives. Said gave just importance to the French invasion of Egypt as one of the early expressions of European territorial expansionism in the Eastern Mediterranean, and pointed out how many orientalist were engaged in colonial enterprises. One of the scholars discussed here, Sacy, is one of Said’s main examples. He says of him that he was: “not only the first modern and institutional European Orientalist . . . he was also the teacher of Champollion.”⁷ However, Sacy is mostly dealt with as an Arabist. The focus on Arabists and Semitists is also common in Said’s critics; the study of Egypt’s pre-Islamic past is seldom treated in the history of orientalism and has rarely been connected to Said’s concept of ‘orientalism.’ There are a few scattered references in *Orientalism* to Egyptian studies and Champollion et al. Said later wrote an essay that touched upon Egyptology, but focused mainly on its later developments.⁸

Earlier works than Said’s are interesting when trying to understand the role played by the Egyptian decipherment within the discipline of oriental studies. Raymond Schwab’s interpretation in his 1950 *La renaissance orientale* is stimulating both in how it prefigures certain Saidian ideas, and in how it puts the decipherment firmly within a larger historical perspective of oriental studies.⁹ Schwab’s reasoning is part of a larger context where he advocated the importance of the study of South and East Asian languages and cultures. As the title implies, Schwab was proposing that systematic studies of Asian cultures and languages led to a renaissance

⁶ Herbert Scurla, *Reisen im Orient: Carsten Niebuhr, Ulrich Jasper Setzen, Richard Lepsius, Heinrich Brugsch: Berichte deutscher Forscher aus dem 18. und 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Verl. der Nation, 1961), 6. Scurla (1905–1981) joined the NSDAP 1933, was a high civil servant during the Third Reich, and also managed to embrace the reigning ideology of the DDR.

⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 18.

⁸ Edward Said, “The Empire at Work: Verdi’s *Aida*,” in Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993); Paul John Frandsen, “Aida and Edward Said: Attitudes and Images of Ancient Egypt and Egyptology,” in *Assyria and Beyond: Studies Presented to Mogens Trolle Larsen*, ed. J. G. Dercksen (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2004).

⁹ Raymond Schwab, *La renaissance orientale* (Paris: Payot, 1950). Translated as *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, with preface by Edward Said (New York: Columbia UP, 1984).

comparable to the fifteenth century re-elaboration of the classical period. He concentrated on Indian studies but his insights warrant discussion for his positioning of the knowledge of Egyptian in a wider perspective. He justly pointed out that there had been several decipherments before the Egyptian one and that there would be even more after it. Schwab discusses the differences between the Egyptian decipherment and how other Asian languages were studied:

The recovery of Sanskrit was only half due to Western genius. The other half was due to a transmission of knowledge that still lived in local tradition. The great difference between the deciphering of the language of the Hindu and that of the Egyptian, apart from the difference in the scripts themselves, is that the hieroglyphics had not been understood by anyone for centuries. Champollion performed a unique feat: he delivered up a secret no longer kept by any living person.¹⁰

The argument may be read as two-fold: Sanskrit was not a dead language and there was a tradition of learning in India, thus the Western scholars could not appropriate the language without the participation of local scholars and traditions. The second part, if read in a Saidian ‘orientalism’ key would be that the restitution of the Egyptian language from the dead, and the supposed independence of the quest from local learning, made it an especially Western endeavour with little or no input from locals.

Champollion did read the hieroglyphs for the first time in many centuries, but to say he did so entirely without referring to “knowledge that still lived in local tradition” is questionable. Champollion had studied Coptic with Copts and Åkerblad had similarly had his first extended experiences of the Coptic language and scripts during his visit to Egypt in the 1780s. No one knew how to read the hieroglyphs but most scholars agreed, even before the decipherment, that knowledge of Coptic would be necessary to be able to read the ancient Egyptian language. Coptic had already been studied for centuries and read in cooperation either with Egyptians—predominately churchmen—in Egypt or with Copts who had left Egypt for Europe.

Schwab’s argument implies unbroken traditions in the Sanskrit case and broken traditions in the Egyptian case. Arguments based on the presumption of entirely broken traditions should in general be viewed with suspicion. There are of course languages that are completely ‘dead’ and that we will probably never be able to read and understand. But recent

¹⁰ Schwab, *Oriental Renaissance*, 25.

history has also shown that many scripts that have hitherto been considered mysterious did represent languages that are connected to living tongues. Among the most famous is Linear B, the script found on Crete. In the 1950s it was shown to be the written form of an early variety of Greek. The Mayan glyphs (see below) were only recently deciphered when it was proven that they represented a language that is still spoken in the area.

Similarly, the contention of a continuously living tradition often disregards periods of both 'decadence' and 'renaissance' in the use and study of languages. Coptic is itself an interesting example of the fortunes of an ancient language. It was long supposed that the language almost died out during the early Ottoman occupation of Egypt but this history has recently been revised in the context of new investigations on both Ottoman Egypt and the Coptic Church.¹¹ Nevertheless, Schwab's idea in relation to Egyptian history is also interesting because it mirrors the claim of an image of ancient Egypt as a blank slate before the decipherment. Egyptology as a discipline often appears to have taken the decipherment as the only starting point. It has in certain ways denied its own history before the Egyptian language was read.

In many ways Egyptology has lived its own separate life with surprisingly little contact with other disciplines. There are, however, signs that this situation is slowly changing.¹² The influential Egyptologist Jan Assmann expressed a similar feeling, referring to the entirety of Egyptian studies in relation to Egypt's role in ancient history: "even today, 160 years after Champollion's decipherment . . . the . . . legacy of the high culture of ancient Egypt has scarcely become a part of our own cultural recollection. It is an object of fascination, but we do not really comprehend it."¹³ Assmann's statement, admittedly partisan, is based on his assumption that the importance of Egyptian history has not been sufficiently recognized in

¹¹ Hamilton, *Copts and the West*.

¹² For a discussion on Egyptology's insularity (the word used on the volume's cover) and its new directions see David Jeffreys, "Introduction—Two Hundred Years of Ancient Egypt: Modern History and Ancient Archaeology," in *Views of Ancient Egypt since Napoleon Bonaparte: Imperialism, Colonialism and Modern Appropriations*, ed. David Jeffreys (London: UCL Press, 2003); Timothy Champion, "Beyond Egyptology: Egypt in 19th and 20th Century Archaeology and Anthropology," in *The Wisdom of Egypt: Changing Visions Through the Ages*, ed. Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion (London: UCL Press, 2003).

¹³ Jan Assmann, *Ägypten: Theologie und Frömmigkeit einer frühen Hochkultur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer 1984). Quoted from the trans. *The Search for God in Ancient Egypt*, rev. ed. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2001), ix.

understanding the history of Mediterranean societies and religions.¹⁴ His claim may also have a bearing on the understanding of the decipherment. Fascination with the decipherers' deeds has impeded understanding of the process of decipherment and its place in a larger perspective of language and oriental studies.

A less pessimistic view would be to simply consider the time perspective in relation to Egyptian studies. Assmann, who has been reading and analysing Egyptian texts throughout his professional life, identifies the beginning of Egyptology with the decipherment in 1822, as is standard. Assmann's 160 years (now closer to 200) are not very many compared to the much longer history of other related disciplines. Egyptian textual studies are a relative newcomer to the scholarly arena.

As discussed in the passages on Åkerblad's stay in Egypt in the 1780s, there have recently been advances in Egyptian historiography, and this has also led to a revaluation of Arabic and Islamic interest in Egypt's past. A common prejudice is that the Arab conquerors were uninterested in Egypt's ancient history. The Egyptologist Okasha El Daly has shown by investigating a large number of manuscript sources that there has been continuous interest in the ancient Egyptian past, both in Egypt itself and throughout the Islamic world during the period from the Arabian conquest until the end of the Middle Ages, when his account ends.¹⁵ Most sources still remain unpublished and have not been regarded as being of possible interest when investigating the history of Egyptology. Åkerblad and his colleagues were aware of such sources in a way that differs from modern Egyptologists. In their geographical work Åkerblad, Quatremère and Champollion used all the sources available to them. These comprised not only sources from antiquity but also a wide range of both Coptic and Arabic texts as testified, for instance, by Sacy's edition of 'Abd al-Laṭīf's description of Egypt.

Whether the Arabic tradition of interest in Egyptian history amounts to an 'unbroken tradition' remains to be seen. Many of the Arabic writers used classical sources and elaborated on information handed down by Greek and Roman geographers and historians. However, the void that modern Egyptology has constructed during the Islamic period can

¹⁴ Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997).

¹⁵ Okasha El Daly, *Egyptology: The Missing Millennium: Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings* (London: UCL Press, 2005).

be refuted. To what extent Arabic invaders had access to the Egyptian language is an open question. El Daly discusses Arabic texts on the Egyptian language and scripts and concludes that some of these writers knew that Coptic was the same language as ancient Egyptian.

The early Egyptologists, now referring to Åkerblad et al., were able to draw on a wider range of sources because they were not yet Egyptologists in the post-decipherment sense of the discipline. In comparison with many modern specialists they had a wider linguistic background with firm knowledge of Semitic as well as of classical languages. One of the criticisms made against for instance Said is that he did not fully recognise the breadth of the long history of oriental studies when defining his view of 'orientalism.'

Language studies, in a wide sense including philology, linguistics, semiotics etc., have undergone great changes over the last two centuries. Contemporary debate on the foundations of so-called Western or European culture—whatever that happens to be—have often been framed in linguistic terms. The polemics surrounding Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization* are telling in this sense. The first volume was published in 1987 and only in 2006 was the work completed with the publication of the third volume: *The linguistic evidence*. Bernal's attempt to shift and enlarge the base of classical civilization has been incessantly debated.¹⁶ His arguments are heavily based on etymology and language history. He claims reasonably that the study of languages and their histories has been a fundamental part of the construction of oriental studies as well as 'orientalism' in Said's meaning. The point is not being made to support Bernal's argument and his often cavalier treatment of linguistic and archaeological evidence. What remains important to recognize is that language still holds a central role in our understanding of 'orientalism,' maybe only less explicitly so than in the early stages of oriental studies. Said pointed out that: "Almost without exception, every Orientalist began his career as a philologist, and the revolution in philology that produced Bopp, Sacy, Burnouf, and their students was a comparative

¹⁶ For a primer on the debate see Mary R. Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers, eds., *Black Athena Revisited* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina UP, 1996), and Bernal's answer; *Black Athena Writes Back: Martin Bernal Responds to his Critics*, ed. David Chioni Moore (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2001). For recent contributions see Emily Greenwood's review essay: "Re-rooting the Classical Tradition: New Directions in Black Classicism," *Classical Reception Journal* 1 (2009): 87–103.

science based on the premise that languages belong to families, of which the Indo-European and the Semitic are two great instances.”¹⁷

Bernal tried to enlarge these two supposed bases of Western culture by introducing the importance of Egyptian and African influence on Greek and Eastern Mediterranean ancient cultures. Champollion figures almost as a hero in Bernal’s work, confirming Bernal’s opinions by “his championing of Egypt over Greece combined with his political beliefs to infuriate Hellenist and Indianist scholars, who continued to do all they could to block his academic career.”¹⁸ Whatever one’s position, the debate on Egypt’s influence and importance is likely to grow in the wake of a more general revaluation of oriental influences on classical civilizations.¹⁹

The extent to which it makes sense to ascribe our own preoccupations to previous scholars is a tricky question. What we can state with certainty is that the views of the Eastern Mediterranean held by Åkerblad and some of his colleagues were quite different from a later mainstream view of Greek exceptionalism that took hold during the nineteenth century. This would be proven again in 1813 when Åkerblad wrote a pioneering dissertation about Greek magic where he also discussed Egyptian matters (p. 341ff). As mentioned above in the context of Friedrich Schlegel’s *Weisheit der Indier* . . . , there were several observers who already in the early nineteenth century saw how the separation of Greek and oriental studies would lead to a gulf between the two disciplines. They rightly foresaw how this would result in a diminished understanding of oriental influences on what was now beginning to be defined as a solely ‘Greek civilization.’ A fierce academic battle between those who championed Greece and those who defended oriental influences arose in the 1810s, the so-called *Creuzer Streit*. This was a conflict not wholly unlike the debate around *Black Athena* and Egyptian influences. In his championing of oriental origins George Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1852) maintained Egypt’s

¹⁷ Said, *Orientalism*, 98. Said later propagated for “The return to philology” as a method of literary criticism. Said, *Humanism and democratic criticism* (New York: Columbia UP, 2004).

¹⁸ Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization: 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1987), 225.

¹⁹ A brief introduction to the debate on Egyptian influences on Greek art: Jeremy Tanner, “Finding the Egyptian in Early Greek Art,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Egypt*, ed. Roger Matthews and Cornelia Roemer (London: UCL Press, 2003). The relations between ancient Egypt and the rest of Africa are a contested field. For a recent collection of essays see: *Ancient Egypt in Africa*, ed. David O’Connor and Andrew Reid (London: UCL Press, 2003).

important role as a territory of transition for Eastern religion and mythology on their path to Greece and Europe.²⁰

Politics and Scholarship

Not all of the participants in the decipherment were language scholars or orientalists. In late 1814 Åkerblad received a letter from Thomas Young, the foreign secretary of the Royal Society of London. Young was a physician who made major contributions in optics, mathematics, medicine, the establishment of longitude etc. Young's achievements in many disciplines defy easy description but—like those of other scholars participating in the decipherment—these have often been overshadowed by his involvement in Egyptian matters.²¹

He was born into a Quaker family and was staunchly opposed to slavery; in his youth he refused to eat sugar and other products from the West Indian plantations. An inheritance in 1797 made him financially independent. He spent a year in Göttingen in 1795–96 where in addition to graduating in physics he furthered his knowledge of the classics by studying with Heyne. His plan was to visit Italy, but the French invasion forced him to return to Britain. Young, who had always had an interest in languages, but above all in scientific challenges, became interested in the problem of Egyptian languages in 1813. By 1814 he had begun the serious study of Egyptian papyri. In May of the same year a paper of his was read at the Society of Antiquaries where he proposed *A conjectural Translation of the Egyptian Inscription of the stone of Rosetta, obtained by Comparison with the Greek*.²²

Young published his first Egyptian investigations anonymously. A friend explained this as a result of Young's reluctance to publish in an

²⁰ George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2004), 121–50; Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 66f.

²¹ Apart from nineteenth-century biographies the two most wide-ranging titles are Alexander Wood's *Thomas Young: Natural philosopher, 1773–1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1954) and Andrew Robinson's recent and laudatory *The Last Man Who Knew Everything: Thomas Young, The Anonymous Polymath Who Proved Newton Wrong, Explained How We See, Cured the Sick, and Deciphered the Rosetta Stone, Among Other Feats of Genius* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

²² Published in *Archaeologia* 18 (1817) and also in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816.

area outside of his professional knowledge.²³ Young eventually did publish Egyptian contributions under his own name, but only after the decipherment was achieved in 1822. He then wanted to strengthen the claims of his own contributions to the decipherment, which could not be done in anonymity.

Young informed himself thoroughly about what had been written since the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. He realised that the first person he should interrogate was Åkerblad. He wrote him in August 1814 asking him to communicate any new findings on the Rosetta inscriptions.²⁴ The day before he had written to Sacy in Paris to ask about Åkerblad's work: "I am very anxious to know if Mr. Akerblad has continued his attempts to decipher it, since the publication of the letter which he addressed to you on the subject." He added that he did not believe that Åkerblad's alphabet would be of much further help, except for "enabling us to decipher the proper names."²⁵

Sacy's answer from Paris arrived earlier than Åkerblad's from Rome. Young published his correspondence with Åkerblad and Sacy in the journal *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, often called *Cambridge Museum*.²⁶ Young omitted several passages that he considered to be too outspoken; the letters were printed in full only in 1855. When he sent the 1816 printed correspondence to Sacy he told him not to worry: "I have taken care to not introduce anything that could compromise you."²⁷ The following passages from Sacy's letters are an example of what was not published. Sacy started out by stating his scepticism about the possibility that Åkerblad would get further results in his work with the Demotic inscription:

²³ [Hudson Gurney], *Memoir of the Life of Thomas Young, M.D. F.R.S. Foreign Associate of the Royal Institute of France etc. etc. With a Catalogue of His Works and Essays* (London, 1831), 35.

²⁴ As usual the letters are not conserved. Åkerblad refers to the date 21 August in his answer, in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 30.

²⁵ Young to Sacy, 20 August 1814 (dated in Sacy's answer), extract reprinted in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, 1816, 168.

²⁶ The publication history of Young's Egyptian works and correspondence is confusing. In addition to publishing in reviews of infrequent periodicity he had off-prints and reprints made. The first correspondence was published in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, May 1816, 155–204: "Extracts of Letters and Papers Relating to the Egyptian Inscription of Rosetta." The entire journal was reprinted in 1826. The second part of the correspondence: "Additional Letters Relating to the Inscription of Rosetta" was published first in no. 7, November 1821, and in the reprint 1826, 329–39.

²⁷ Young to Sacy, 5 May 1816, London, in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 59.

but he assures me that he has read a great number of the inscription's words that he has recognized as Coptic words, and he has cited a few to me. I do not hide from you, Monsieur, that in spite of the kind of approbation I gave to Mr Akerblad's system in my response that I addressed to him, I always had strong doubts about the utility of his alphabet.²⁸

This is confirmation of Sacy's lukewarm reception of Åkerblad's Rosetta *Lettre* in 1802. However, according to Sacy, Åkerblad was not the only one who flattered himself that he had got further:

I must add that Mr Akerblad is not the only one that flatters himself of having read the Egyptian [Demotic] text of the Rosetta inscription. Mr Champollion, who just has published two volumes on the ancient geography of Egypt, and who has much occupied himself with the Coptic language also pretends to have read this inscription.

While Sacy simply questioned Åkerblad's chances, he was even more doubtful about Champollion's abilities. Champollion was working intensely with the inscription. Åkerblad had also taken up the task on Young's request. He lamented the fact that there was no possibility in Rome of getting any information on English books and asked Young to inform him of any titles published on Egyptian subjects during the last decade. Åkerblad wrote to a friend in Pisa:

I who do not know anything, have been driven by a letter that the Secretary of the Royal Society in London wrote me to resume my old researches on the tri-lingual Rosetta inscription, as the said secretary wishes to know about my discoveries on that inscription posterior to the publication of my letter to Mr de Sacy. That makes it necessary for me to occupy myself with very boring matters that I have for more than ten years condemned to perpetual oblivion.²⁹

Åkerblad's twenty-page densely written letter to Young contained information on the strategies he used when approaching the text whilst preparing his 1802 *Lettre*, as well as a new interpretation of the first five lines of the Demotic inscription. He also made many general observations on the Egyptian language and the decipherment. Åkerblad included a detailed word-by-word analysis of the first lines of the Demotic inscription, proposing a Coptic translation. Young published an abbreviated and translated version of Åkerblad's letter, which still ran to thirteen pages in the *Cambridge Museum*.

²⁸ Sacy to Young, 23 September 1814, Paris, in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 17.

²⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 21 December 1814, KVHAA.

Åkerblad showed that he had made substantial efforts since his *Lettre*, and suggested many more words than in 1802. But he was hindered by his belief that the Demotic script was purely phonetic. In this sense Young had gone further, and in the letter to Sacy of October 1814 he expressed an intuition which Åkerblad never arrived at. Young observed that “the inscription contains at least a hundred different characters, which it is impossible to explain by means of this [Åkerblad’s] alphabet, ingenious as it is, at least without long and laborious studies.”³⁰

Alphabetic scripts, including those that do not have vowels, normally have a maximum of around 50 letters. Scripts that are syllabic, so called syllabaries, can have almost 400 signs and logographic writing systems can have several thousands of signs. We now know that the number of signs is an important indication of the character of a script.

The intuition remained to be fully developed that the Demotic, like the hieroglyphs, was a (complicated) mix of phonetic and logographic signs. This understanding was the source of Champollion’s breakthrough in 1822. Champollion had worked intensely with the Egyptian scripts for more than a decade before he arrived at this idea. The breakthrough was made on the hieroglyphs and not on the Demotic script. Once Champollion had understood that the hieroglyphs were a mix of phonetic and logographic signs he was able to apply this knowledge to the Demotic script. In the first decades after the decipherment most efforts to read Egyptian texts were dedicated to the older hieroglyphic script. Young was one of the few scholars who early on concentrated on the Demotic, but it would only be fully understood and systematically studied in the late 1840s. Being less ancient, Demotic was in an oblique way considered less prestigious, a common fate in the study of ancient cultures. Some observers maintain that still today the study of Demotic and later Egyptian literature and history is considered less prestigious than the study of the more ancient periods.³¹

What is clear from Young’s correspondence is that he had problems in recognizing Åkerblad’s contribution. Like Sacy he vacillated between

³⁰ Young to Sacy, 3 October 1814, *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816, 171.

³¹ Young, (posthumously) *Rudiments of a Dictionary of the Ancient Egyptian Language, in the Enchorial* [Young’s term for Demotic] *Characters* (London, 1831). The actual start of Demotic studies is often set at 1848 when Heinrich Brugsch published: *Scriptura Aegyptiorum demotica ex papyris et inscriptionibus explanata* (Berlin). See e.g. Edda Bresciani, ed., *Letteratura e poesia dell’antico Egitto* (Torino: Einaudi, 2007), x ff.

giving Åkerblad credit for what he had achieved and being sceptical of his work. He wrote to Sacy: "I had read Mr. Åkerblad's essay [the 1802 *Lettre*] but hastily . . . last winter, and I was not disposed to place much confidence in the little that I recollected of it." However, Young continued a few lines later: "It is only since I received your obliging letter, that I have again read Mr. Åkerblad's work; and I have found that it agrees almost in every instance with the results of my own investigations."³²

By 31 January 1815 Åkerblad had finished his long letter with his new readings of the inscription: "I have finished the work that was requested of me from London on the Rosetta inscription and I believe that my package will be sent this morning. But I do not think that this work will be printed, neither do I desire it."³³

Whilst Åkerblad may not have wanted his letter to Young to be printed he did give his consent. He prayed that if it was to be published Young should translate his "barbare" French into English. He added that if Young wanted him to continue to work on the inscription he would be most grateful if he would send him a new copy because "mine is today in such a bad state that it cannot longer be used for investigations that require much exactitude."³⁴

The correspondence between Sacy and Young is cited in many accounts of the decipherment and the most often underlined aspect is the acrimonious relationship between Champollion and Sacy. When Young answered Champollion's queries on the reading of the inscription he also asked Champollion if Sacy had passed on his article on the Rosetta inscription that he had sent to Sacy.³⁵ Champollion's response was that as a matter of fact Sacy had not given him any news of Young's publication and prayed Young to send it directly to him. As in the case of Åkerblad's *Mémoire*, Sacy had again neglected to pass on publications that he knew would highly interest Champollion. That this was intentional was proven by his advice to Young. Sacy warned Young about Champollion (this part of the letter was only printed in 1855):

³² Young to Sacy, 3 October 1814, in *Museum criticum; or, Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816, 169.

³³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 2 February 1815, KVHAA.

³⁴ JDÅ to Young, 31 January 1815, fol. 10v, Add MS 21,026, BL. This print is the one in KB, reproduced as figure 46 and plate 21.

³⁵ Young to Champollion, no date, draft letter with many changes and cancellations on Champollion's 10 November 1814 letter, Add MS 21,026, BL; in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 64.

If I have one piece of advice to give you it is not to communicate too much of your discoveries to Mr Champollion. It could lead to him later claiming priority. He has in several places of his work tried to make believe that he has discovered many words in the Egyptian [Demotic] Rosetta inscription.³⁶

Nor did Sacy spare his pupil Quatremère. He added a succinct description—another passage that was not printed by Young—of the characters of the three main Coptic scholars:

Moreover, I can not convince myself that if M. Akerblad, Et.[ienne] Quatremère or Champollion had made any real progress in reading the Egyptian text, that they would not have hurried on to make their discovery public. That would be a rare modesty that I do not think any of them capable of.

But Young published anyway, that is without having made any clear and demonstrable advances, at least in Champollion's eyes, which looked sceptically upon Young's attempt to translate the inscription. When Champollion received Young's printed correspondence with Åkerblad and Sacy, he wrote to his brother that the competition did not worry him much:

What I know of Dr. Young's discoveries in the letter he sent to me on the Rosetta inscription does not worry me. Akerblad writes me that he has anyway given up his work and to mention the Rabbi [Sacy] is not even worth the trouble. Thus I do not fear that I will be forestalled.³⁷

Åkerblad had informed Champollion of the work on the inscription that he had undertaken at Young's request. It appears Åkerblad notified his old and new colleagues openly of what he was doing. He similarly told Sacy of Young's request that he reinitiate his work on the Rosetta inscription. When Åkerblad received Young's offprint from the *Cambridge Museum* in March 1816 he immediately told Sacy that he was not completely happy about the way Young had published his letter. Sacy in turn wrote to Young and passed on Åkerblad's comments, with the proviso that Young would not tell Åkerblad.³⁸ Both Sacy and Åkerblad frequently refer to the letters they exchanged. Nevertheless, in Sacy's voluminous preserved correspondence on scholarly matters there is not one single letter from Åkerblad.

³⁶ Sacy to Young, 20 July 1815, Paris, Add MS 21,026, BL; in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 51.

³⁷ Champollion to Champollion-Figeac, August 1817, not referenced, in Hartleben, *Champollion*, 1:270. Champollion's copy of Young's published correspondence in the *Museum criticum*; or, *Cambridge Classical Researches* is dedicated by Young but does not have any annotations. NAF 20389, BNF.

³⁸ Sacy to Young, Paris 14 May 1816, in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 60.

This may be interpreted as a sign that Sacy was extremely selective of which papers he saved for posterity.

The last letter from Champollion to Åkerblad that we know of dates from early 1815 when he sent his books and excused himself for the interruption in correspondence because of the political turmoil. Champollion and his brother were in Grenoble when Napoleon stopped there on his way to take power in Paris. Both Champollion and his brother supported Napoleon's return. When Sacy wrote to Young after the final fall of Napoleon and the re-establishment of the monarchy, another crime was added to Champollion's sins:

I do not hear talk of Mr Champollion anymore. His political conduct during the three months reign of Ahriman has hardly shown him as honourable and without doubt he does not dare to write me anymore. . . . He is prone to play the role of the jay that equips himself with the feathers of the peacock. That role often ends quite badly.³⁹

Sacy compared Napoleon to *Ahriman*, the destructive spirit of the Zoroastrian deity *Ahura Mazda*. But Sacy had also let himself be equipped with different feathers, to borrow his own metaphor from Aesop's fable. He had in 1813 accepted the title *baron de l'Empire* from Napoleon, though in private he was extremely critical of the emperor. Champollion himself commented on Sacy's ennoblement: "What would you say if you knew that the said person certainly does not forget to sign off as *Baron S. de S.*! Such are men, they like rattles & you have to flatter their weaknesses."⁴⁰ To combine ambition and political conviction with a great scholarly career meant making compromises.

Politics were important in many aspects of scholarly work. Millin wrote how "The overturning of Napoleon's throne" would bring great changes.⁴¹ When Millin's *Magasin encyclopédique* was interrupted in 1816 Sacy could not hide his glee. Sacy, who had been a frequent collaborator of Millin, now opted to write in the reborn *Journal des Savants*. He was not unhappy about the cessation of Millin's journal and wrote to Münter: "M. Millin is

³⁹ Sacy to Young, 20 January 1816, Paris, *ibid.*, 59. Sacy compared Napoleon to *Ahriman* in other contexts. Henri Dehérain, "Correspondence de comte Ouarov avec Silvestre de Sacy," *Journal des Savants*, 1914, 451. Champollion also used "Ahriman Polycarpe" as a collective name for Sacy and Quatremère. Champollion to Saint-Martin, 12 December 1811, Grenoble, fol. 91, NAF 915, BNF.

⁴⁰ Champollion to Saint-Martin, 19 November 1814, Grenoble, fol. 106, NAF 915, BNF.

⁴¹ Millin to Cancellieri, 23 May 1814, Paris, fol. 242, Add MS 22,891, BL.

among the men of letters that speculate on literature. They worship the gold of the temple, not the deity. But let this stay between us."⁴²

Considering how important the *Magasin encyclopédique* had been for orientalist work since its foundation in the 1790s, and Sacy's frequent articles in it, his judgment on Millin was harsh. Millin was of course often a hard-nosed businessman. He managed to publish the journal for two tumultuous decades. This was a feat from the perspective of other short-lived publications. Sacy's comment on Millin was of course also political; it is easy to imagine that he would have been more tolerant of Millin's ways if they had shared similar political convictions.

The decipherment is often described as a competition, articulated on different levels. Starting from a personal level the most famous 'story' of the decipherment is the difficult relationship between Sacy and Champollion. To what extent this competition and animosity was based on personal differences, teacher against pupil and vice versa, academic rivalry, political differences, competition between countries etc. is seldom made clear in the narratives.

The literature on scientific and academic disputes is growing, and the importance of the participants' social status has been highlighted in recent historiography. Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's 1985 *Leviathan and the air-pump. Hobbes, Boyle, and the experimental life* underlined both the social status and the political convictions of the protagonists in the debate on experimental science in the seventeenth century.

Scholarly conflicts often play an important role in intellectual biographies, not least this one. Competition is often represented as a kind of a race—a race towards learning or solutions. The decipherment lends itself particularly well to such a teleological explanation; everybody knew what they were after. Such a scenario is in fact a rare thing in the history of science where the goal or the solution can often only be constructed in retrospect.

By framing the process as a competition, the temptation is to assign the actors a similar status. Competition tends to prescribe equality; at least in the sense that the actors are part of the same line-up, they have been admitted to the contest. Everyone is aware that such equality is a chimera, but the metaphor is strong and influences our interpretation of events. Seeing the process as a competition also makes it more difficult to understand what happens when what are perceived as the rules of the game

⁴² Sacy to Münster, 26 October 1816, NKS 1698, KBK.

and what we might refer to as 'fair-play,' for want of a better expression, are not adhered to.

The most common way to interpret the rivalries in the decipherment has been in terms of national competition. This is in many respects a valid key; the early history of the Rosetta Stone cannot be dislocated from the context of war and the national glory of scholarly achievement. But as in the case of individual rivalry, those not part of the concrete battle tend to disappear. The challenge may be how to think about the issues within both political and personal contexts. The political issues are clearly expressed and documented. Less often discussed are other sets of contrasts than those of national rivalries, such as the different social backgrounds of the participants, the institutional make-up and the prestige attached to belonging to the institutions, the provinces against the capitals etc. Our perception of contemporary academic battles also influences our understanding.

Champollion came from a relatively humble background, but as his father was a bookseller he had had access to learning, in a manner not completely different from Åkerblad's extraction. Champollion idolized Napoleon; he was born in 1790 and had no personal experience of the previous regime or the revolution. Champollion was a lower-class outsider from the provinces who could only get a position in Paris in parity with his knowledge after the success of the decipherment. He was eventually elected member of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* in 1830. Åkerblad had supported the French Revolution and hoped for changes in Sweden. Sacy and Åkerblad knew each other well, and the Parisian orientalist must have been aware of Åkerblad's political opinions during the early years of the century in Paris.

The official status of Sacy and Young was similar; they had long successful careers and political connections through their academic positions. Political sympathies during the 1810s transgressed national borders and it is legitimate to hypothesize that Sacy and Young's relationship was favoured by what they perceived as common ideas. It is of course impossible to know to what extent Sacy's vitriolic comments on Champollion in his letters to Young are motivated by personal or political reasons; but politics played a clear role in his attempt to impede communication between Young and Champollion.

Likewise, religious issues need to be mentioned. Sacy and Quatremère both had backgrounds in the Catholic Jansenist movement. Young came from a Quaker family. Åkerblad had no faith and Champollion must almost be considered an atheist. Champollion got into trouble with the

church when it became obvious that the Egyptian chronology challenged Christian perceptions of historical time. These differences can to a large extent be joined with the political differences, but in the context of the history of orientalism it is also important to take into account the degree to which the Church influenced the study of oriental languages and cultures. Champollion's early championing of Egypt was more difficult to adhere to for those coming from a strict religious background.

That history writing is a national endeavour is not news. Even today many of the contributions highlight the work of the respective national champion, generally Champollion or Young. Among the most entertaining exceptions to this rule was the British Egyptologist Peter Le Page Renouf. In 1897 Renouf passionately upheld Champollion's primacy in the face of any attempt to transfer glory to Thomas Young. However, he also clearly stated that he did not share Champollion's political views: "We may sympathize (and I do most thoroughly) with the political feelings of the old royalist [Sacy], but we must make allowance for them in judging of somebody else, in a question which has nothing to do with politics."⁴³ Renouf of course knew that it did have to do with politics, and it still does today.

Jean Leclant, professor of Egyptology and perpetual secretary of the *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* until his death in 2011, underlined in a speech made to celebrate the second centenary of Champollion's birth the: "profoundly European aspect of his personality and actions. This induces us to present a pan-European scientific community that was particularly active at the time."⁴⁴ Leclant wrote in 1990 when pan-European issues were highly charged; nevertheless his idea of a scientific community well mirrors the British observation that the distribution of the plates of the Rosetta inscription was a sign of the cooperative nature of early Egyptology. The context had changed. Instead of only championing the respective national scientific hero, the decipherment and early Egyptology can now be used as an example to support the ideology of international scientific collaboration.

⁴³ Sir Peter Le Page Renouf, "Young and Champollion," *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 19 (1897): 206.

⁴⁴ Jean Leclant, "Aux sources de l'égyptologie européenne: Champollion, Young, Rosellini, Lepsius," *Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres. Comptes rendus des séances de l'année 1991* (CRAIBL), 744.

Åkerblad's Final Egyptian Work

Sacy passed on Åkerblad's comments on the way his letter was published to Young who answered that Åkerblad had no reason for his complaints: "I am indebted to you for telling me what Mr Åkerblad remarked to you on my translation of his letter . . . but surely he can not complain about me."⁴⁵

Young had translated and abbreviated Åkerblad's long letter and also added a five-page answer. A few months later Åkerblad wrote to Young directly and expressed his concerns. Åkerblad started by thanking Young for sending him the Society of Antiquaries' reproductions of the inscriptions that he had requested. This time Åkerblad wrote directly in English. He may have learned from the way in which his previous letter had been translated.

Young pointed out in his printed answer that Åkerblad's alphabet did not seem to be able to carry the reading forward: "I must however confess, that all the learning and ingenuity, which you have displayed in it [the letter], only serve still more to convince me of the extreme hopelessness of the attempt to read the Inscription of Rosetta, by means of any imaginable alphabet, into tolerable Coptic."⁴⁶ Young was right but he nonetheless continued in Åkerblad's footsteps without developing his own intuition by taking the leap from a purely alphabetic interpretation. Åkerblad's answer to Young contained weary criticism and it seems he thought that Young had used his work without properly acknowledging it:

By your third letter to Mr. de Sacy I learn that you have adopted almost the whole of my alphabet and most part of the readings which I proposed in my printed letter. In the subsequent series of words you vastly differ from my way of dividing the words, except in two or three instances—you scarcely admit of the possibility of reading the Inscription in *tolerable coptic*. If by this expression you intend that small portion of the language which is contained in Lacroze's lexicon, you may have some reason, but our stock of Coptic words extracted from manuscripts is so much more extensive, and several passages in the Inscription may possibly be explained by such coptic words which you never meet with in your Lacroze.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Young to Sacy, draft on Sacy's letter, fol. 31, Add MS 21,026, BL, in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 61.

⁴⁶ Young to JDÅ, August 1815, *Museum criticum*; or, *Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 6, 1816, 194.

⁴⁷ JDÅ to Young, 19 April 1816, Rome, fol. 29, Add MS 21,026, BL; in Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 72. Quoted from the manuscript.

Åkerblad maintained that Coptic was the key to understanding the Egyptian language and that the existing dictionaries were insufficient to understand the connections between Coptic and the ancient language. This was a problem that Åkerblad, together with Champollion and Quatremère, had recognized. All three were working on their own dictionaries to extend the known Coptic vocabulary. Despite Young's criticism of Åkerblad's 1802 alphabet, he had still used it while trying to read more words in the Demotic inscription:

I enter in no discussion about the objections you make to several of my readings, had I published them in my letter to Mr. de Sacy you might have adopted them as well as those contained in the same letter. But having now formed a system of your own, you ought of course to disapprove of my conjectures. Todo puede ser, say the Spaniards, and perhaps your way of reading may be much better than my own.

This is the tired point Åkerblad makes; had he published more of his readings Young would have acknowledged them, but as he had not printed them Young was free to make his own conjectures. As is clearly visible on Åkerblad's copy of the Demotic inscription (figures 46 and 47, see also the colour plates) he had divided the Demotic script into words that he tried to identify as related to Coptic. In his letter to Young he had proposed a number of readings based on what he believed were groups of signs that could be read as words. Young is sometimes thought to have been the first to systematically divide the inscription into isolated words, but it may very well be the case that he was inspired by Åkerblad's efforts, this is at least what Åkerblad seems to imply when writing that "you vastly differ from my way of dividing the words."

He also wrote that Young had turned to the wrong person, Sacy, to get further help: "Only two or three persons in Europe can judge the matter. Our friend Mr. de Sacy I believe is not versed enough in Coptic literature to be admitted as a judge. Quatremère and Champollion are more advanced." This was the select club of Coptic scholars that could settle the issue.

Except for comments on single words, the only one of Young's observations Åkerblad found it necessary to answer was when Young implied that Åkerblad had taken seriously the works of the Swede Nils Gustaf Palin.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Åkerblad had met Palin already in the 1780s, and Palin succeeded him as secretary at the mission in Constantinople. In 1796 he pointed out that Palin was himself a commoner and thus not in line for promotion in the diplomatic service, p. 142. Palin regarded

Åkerblad was not happy that Young had written that he supported Palin's confused explanations: "Your observation No 9. hurts me a little, as I never intended to borrow any light from Mr. Palin's obscure performance" and added, hinting that Young's own system was as confused as that of Åkerblad's fellow Swede: "I hope your system will be more convictive [convincing] than that of Mr. Palin, who scarcely seems to have understood himself."

Young published a response in 1821, after Åkerblad's death. He did not publish Åkerblad's letter, which he instead summarized without mentioning Åkerblad's critique.⁴⁹ Young proposed with less uncertainty how the Demotic signs were connected to the hieroglyphs. The Demotic was explained as a kind of running character derived from the hieroglyphs. He had reached this conclusion by starting to investigate other texts, both Demotic and hieroglyphic. It was now obvious that the Rosetta inscription in itself would not be enough to solve the riddle.

In 1821 no one was sure what the Demotic script represented yet. As late as 1821 Champollion published a small brochure on the non-hieroglyphic Egyptian scripts. He recognised (as Young had also suggested) that the non-hieroglyphic scripts were a kind of shorthand for the hieroglyphs. Champollion asserted that "the writing of the Egyptian manuscripts of the second kind [i.e. non-hieroglyphic] *is not at all alphabetic*" and went on to proclaim that the "characters . . . are signs of things and not signs of sounds."⁵⁰ Only a year later, in 1822, Champollion presented his solution at a meeting at the *Institut* where he showed that the hieroglyphs were made up by both signs acting as letters or syllables and signs retaining their logographic function. His first proof treated proper names of pharaohs but already in 1824 he published a long account that laid the base for all subsequent work on the Egyptian language.

Many reasons have been proposed as to why Young did not get any further, but this is not the place to discuss the actual decipherment. Since

the hieroglyphs as mystical signs and published on Egyptian matters in Dresden 1802 and 1804, and in Paris 1812. He did not abandon his line of inquiry and continued to publish after Champollion's 1822 breakthrough (Florence, 1830). Palin was not the only one who contested Champollion's decipherment. Several scholars, and some of them for decades, refused to recognize that ancient Egyptian was readable. Willy Schwabacher, "Nils Gustaf Palin: Ett svenskt samlaröde i Södern," *Formvännern*, 1948, 19–33.

⁴⁹ Young to JDÄ, 12 August 1816, in *Museum criticum*; or, *Cambridge Classical Researches*, no. 7, 1821, 51–61, in the 1826 reprint, 334–39; Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 79ff.

⁵⁰ Italics in the original. He reputedly withdrew this brochure from the market, and its rarity may be a result of this. Champollion, *De l'écriture hiératique des anciens égyptiens* (Grenoble, 1821, 7 pp. text, 7 pp. plates), 2.

the decipherment, there has been ongoing controversy about the merits of Young's contributions, and about the extent to which Young's work helped Champollion. I believe, maybe self-servingly as the chronicler of a language scholar, that without the knowledge of various languages and writing systems—both Åkerblad and Champollion were extremely interested in the graphic puzzles of writing—it would have taken longer to arrive at the solution. By saying so I do not rank the achievements of Åkerblad and Champollion in the same category, only underline the importance of their similar interests.

The decipherment of the Egyptian scripts can be compared to a recent decipherment, with which it has striking similarities. This is the reading of Mayan glyphs, a decipherment that was only recognised as fully accomplished in the 1990s. Spanish invaders famously destroyed most texts and the knowledge of how to read the glyphs was forgotten. The Mayan decipherment is a fascinating example of how the experiences from reading the hieroglyphs were not taken into account. It was believed that the Mayan glyphs were some kind of unspecified symbolic writing, exactly like the preconceptions about the Egyptian hieroglyphs' mystical significance centuries before. The Mayan decipherment also centred on a kind of Rosetta Stone. This was a list of glyphs with their corresponding phonetic values made by a Spanish churchman in the sixteenth century. When this list was eventually regarded as genuine it was recognized that the glyphs represented a language that was still spoken in the same geographical area, not dissimilar to the fact that Coptic was the descendant of the ancient Egyptian language. The history of the decipherment of the Maya glyphs is an extraordinary, and often depressing, example of how science is compartmentalized. The fact that it took so long to understand that the Mayans had a 'normal' writing system has also been ascribed to thoughts about their culture's supposed inferiority. There are also international political parallels; a Russian linguist made the great breakthrough during the Cold War. This did not favour the acceptance of his results.⁵¹

Why did Åkerblad not get further on with the decipherment? He made a good start with the Rosetta *Lettre* but did not continue his work. The concrete reasons are many; first he accepted the position in The Hague and left Paris. When he came back to Paris in 1803 he became engrossed in

⁵¹ Michael Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, rev. ed. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999); Andrew Robinson, *Lost languages: The Enigma of the World's Undeciphered Scripts* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 104–38.

diplomatic work and he little time to further his studies. He was expelled from France and after having chosen to go to Italy he could not continue his research. During the Napoleonic wars travel was difficult or impossible and scientific exchanges were reduced. Åkerblad started to work with Coptic and Egyptian geography again in 1809 but he must soon have realised that the possibilities of his participation in Parisian Egyptian studies were small. The Champollion brothers were certain that Sacy's and Young's behaviour towards Åkerblad was an important reason for his silence and Åkerblad hinted himself that he had been discouraged by Sacy after his 1802 *Lettre*.

But overcoming such adversities is the hallmark of the successful scientist. The fight against authority and a strong belief in one's achievements are elements in many stories of great scholars and scientists. Champollion is a perfect example of this myth, not only a 'genius' but also the underdog fighting the establishment and winning. Åkerblad instead abandoned the field and gave up hope of making advances in his Egyptian work.

Could he have come further? It is a hypothetical question but not uninteresting. The Danish Egyptologist Erik Iversen's explanation is that Åkerblad got caught up in his own success and that he was not able to give up the idea that the Demotic script was only alphabetic.⁵² It was only through the long work of Young and Champollion that the notion that Demotic was purely alphabetic and that the hieroglyphs were purely logographic was overcome. It was hardly inspiration that made Champollion the champion of the decipherment, but rather adequate preparation and years of hard work. The way was paved by the methodological advances of earlier decipherments, as well as by the work of his immediate predecessors, colleagues and competitors.

When queried by Champollion and Young it appears Åkerblad was forthright and gave what support he could to their efforts. His openness can be interpreted as confirmation that he had given up. He was probably not less self-serving than the other participants in the decipherment, but he lacked the incentives that spurred Champollion and Young on. Åkerblad had witnessed how his geographic *Mémoire* had been ignored in Paris and later felt that Young had appropriated some of his results without full acknowledgement. He was probably never made aware of Champollion's reluctance to share his results with him, nor Sacy's mixed comments, but he was conscious of the consequences of being excluded.

⁵² Iversen, *Myth of Egypt*, 130.

His work with the Rosetta inscription and the vicissitudes around his geographic *Mémoire* are telling testimonies to what it meant to be a peripheral scholar.

Much of the literature on the decipherment has been written in plain nationalist terms; the competition between France and Britain is repeatedly highlighted. A detailed account of Åkerblad's involvement in the decipherment and Egyptian work might be seen as a vindication of Åkerblad's role. Irrespective of the intentions of the author it could be seen as the championing of a Swedish national. It should also be recognised that it is extremely difficult not to take sides when trying to reconstruct and understand the communication between Åkerblad and his colleagues. The focus on Åkerblad may also implicitly overstate his importance, but this is an effect that is difficult to avoid.

Åkerblad's fractious relationship with his country of origin serves as a corrective to his inevitable association with Sweden and Swedish national glory. The rumours that he had denied Sweden while in Italy are proven false below but that does not mean that his attitude towards Sweden was positive. Åkerblad's links with the scholarly community in Sweden were weak after his decision not to return in 1804. He referred to his scholarly fame in a petition in 1811, underlining that his membership of the Paris *Institut* brought honour to Sweden: "I am the first Swede that has had the honour to become a member of the Institut de France, and wherever I am I bring honour to my fatherland."⁵³ But as time passed he realised that his success was not enough to earn him a position in Swedish service. While his *Lettre* was known in Swedish learned circles there are few mentions of Åkerblad's Egyptian work in Swedish printed sources. One was quoted above; Gustav Knös' report from Paris published by Gjörrwell. Another is an anonymous article printed in 1810 which gives an account of the results of the French invasion of Egypt and cites Åkerblad's work in an appreciative manner.⁵⁴

But Åkerblad did not leave the field entirely. He had not given up his Egyptian work in Rome; neither did he abandon his oriental interests while in Italy.

⁵³ JDÅ to Engeström, 10 January 1811, Rome, Enskilda personer, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, 1809–1813, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, UD, SNA.

⁵⁴ "Några ord öfver Resultaterna af Fransosernas Expedition till Egypten (Ifrån Tyskan)," *Läsning i Hvarjehanda. Första Häftet*, 1810, 25–37.

PART FOUR

THE NAPOLEONIC WARS AND RESTORATION IN ITALY

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BOOK THEFTS, INKBLOTS AND FRENCH EXPROPRIATIONS

When Åkerblad left Paris in the autumn of 1804, he was one of Europe's most promising orientalist. His Rosetta *Lettre* had gained him fame and many expected him to continue his work on ancient Egyptian scripts. Instead of returning to Sweden, he chose to go to Italy, where he would spend his final fifteen years.

In this fourth and last section the narrative changes. After Paris and the beginning of his stay in Italy, Åkerblad's nomadic life changed dramatically. The first years in Italy, 1806–9, are treated in chronological order, describing Åkerblad's involvement in Roman research and manuscript thefts in Florence during the French occupation. The changes in narrative structure, from a chronological to a thematic treatment, are introduced once Åkerblad permanently settles in Rome in 1809.

In the aftermath of the dispute between the Swedish king Gustav IV and the French government Åkerblad received orders to leave France for the city of Stralsund, located on the Baltic coast and still a Swedish possession. After having packed and sealed the archives Åkerblad deposited them with the mission chaplain for safekeeping. He left Paris on 16 September 1804.¹

However, instead of going directly to Stralsund he went to Strasbourg. He continued to Rastatt, which he left on 4 October. He had by then come to a decision; instead of going north towards Stralsund he went south to Switzerland. He visited Basel, Geneva, Berne, Lausanne and many smaller places. Åkerblad investigated remains of the Roman settlements that he came across; in his notebook he copied a number of Roman inscriptions.² He left Switzerland in mid-February 1805, passing Chambéry on his way to Turin.

¹ Vat. lat., fol. 69r: "1804. Septembre 16. départ de Paris, 18. Strasbourg, 24. Rastadt, 29. excursion à Bade; Octobre 1. excursion à Carlsruhe, 4. départ de Rastadt, 6. arrivé à Bâle, 12. départ de Bâle, 13. Berne, 17. départ de Berne, 19. Lausanne, 23. promenade à Vevey; Novembre 20. Genève, 24. Ferney; Décembre 18. retour à Lausanne; 1805 Février 15. Genève, 23. Chambéry, 24. départ delà, 27. Turin."

² Vat. lat. 9784, fols. 31rff.

Åkerblad knew that his defection from diplomatic service would not be looked upon lightly. Before he left Paris he had been promised that he would be able to retain his *tractamente*, his subsistence allowance, as a salary. When he arrived in Pisa in July 1805, he received the news that payment of these monies had been withheld on the personal intervention of the king. He immediately petitioned the king. He needed the money and did his best to try to convince the king of his subservience: "I throw myself at Your Majesty's feet to plead for mercy and dare most humbly to solicit . . . to be favoured with your merciful orders."³

Having arrived in Rome, Åkerblad received a letter from the Swedish representative in Florence, repeating the order to return to Sweden. According to the Swedish consul in Rome, Ulisse Pentini, Åkerblad was unhappy at the prospect of returning to Sweden but told Pentini that he would start his trip to Sweden some time after August 1805.⁴

But Åkerblad did not leave. In February 1807 he explained his reasons for not leaving Rome to the Swedish representative at the court of Etruria in Florence, Johan Claes Lagerswärd. He claimed that he had spent the summer of 1805 in Tuscany, selling parts of his collections to make enough money to pay for the voyage north, but when the business was finished "and the moment I proposed to leave; *voilà* the outbreak of the war that made every project to travel through Germany impossible. I have thus remained in Rome, where I have certainly not wasted my time."⁵

In December 1804 Sweden and Britain had formed an alliance, and in August 1805 Sweden joined the Third Coalition in the war against France. Åkerblad was probably right; it would have been difficult or impossible for him to travel north. In a later letter to Stockholm, in which he tries to clear himself of accusations of disobeying the king's orders, he points out that he had visited the French ambassador in Rome who "clearly refused" him a passport to travel north.⁶ He apologised for not notifying the court in Stockholm of his absence with the somewhat dubious excuse that he was persuaded that the letters would not get through.

³ JDÅ to Gustav IV Adolf, 16 August 1805, Pisa, vol. 14, S-Ö, Ser II, Skr till konungen, Gustav IV Adolfs tid, SNA.

⁴ Pentini to Lagerswärd, 1 April 1806, Rome, Italica 32, SNA.

⁵ JDÅ to Lagerswärd, 20 February 1807, Rome, Italica 31, SNA.

⁶ He also added that this could be easily checked in Stockholm. The former French ambassador in Rome, Charles-Jean-Marie Alquier, was now employed in Stockholm. JDÅ to Engeström, 10 January 1811, Rome, Enskilda personer, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, 1809-1813, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, UD, SNA.

Åkerblad probably never intended to return to Sweden. The wars hindered travel, but more important were their effects on the situation in Stockholm. The usual breakdown in communications of wartime would have cut him off from the learned world and he might have been trapped in Sweden until the end of the wars. It is in fact difficult to see what could have enticed Åkerblad to return to Sweden. But Åkerblad had not yet completely given up hope of another diplomatic posting. Every time he proposed that Stockholm appoint him, he got the same reaction: "*Return to Sweden* is the only answer I have received so far."⁷

Åkerblad had not visited Italy since 1799. The main reason for going back, as given in his official correspondence, was to take care of his collections, which had been stuck in Livorno for several years. His earlier attempt to get it transported to Stockholm had failed, and any such plans would now be in vain considering the wars. But there were other reasons drawing him to Italy than being reunited with his papers and antiquities. When commenting in 1803 upon the possibility that his teacher Zoëga would return to Denmark to take up a university position, Åkerblad had written to Münter paraphrasing Goethe's famous song to Mignon: "I always long for Italy, where, where, the lemons glow! . . . even if all the treasures of Denmark and Norway were offered me, they would surely not make me leave Italy."⁸

After having crossed the Alps in 1805, Åkerblad never again left the peninsula. But his relationship with Italy was not romantic in the sense of the tradition that makes Italy a paradisiacal haven for northern Europeans. We know of his mixed attitude towards Italian scholars and the cultural life of Italian cities. Italian scholarship in this period has often been dismissed as provincial. Recent efforts have in many ways nuanced the picture of a stagnant and retrograde Italy.⁹ Åkerblad also knew that Italy offered possibilities to work with materials that had previously

⁷ JDÅ to Engeström, 28 April 1810, Rome, Biographica Å, vol. 1, SNA; duplicate dated 29 April, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, 1809–1813, Enskilda personer, E2K1, vol. 1, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

⁸ JDÅ to Münter, 1 February 1803, The Hague, in Münter, 5:8.

⁹ A comparative study of three Italian cities offers a corrective of this view and indicates new directions of research: Jean Boutier, Brigitte Marin, and Antonella Romano, eds., *Naples, Rome, Florence : une histoire comparée des milieux intellectuels italiens, XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2005). On the particular Roman antiquarian milieu see e.g.: Arnaldo Marcone, "Le opere di carattere storiografico nelle Dissertazioni della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia dell'800," in *I duecento anni di attività della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia (1810–2010)*, ed. Marco Buonocore (Rome: Quasar, 2010), 1–25.

been virtually unknown to the international learned community. He had spelled it out in his application for the post as an art agent in Rome a few years earlier: "Rome still holds untouched riches in almost all branches of learning."¹⁰

The political situation had restricted Åkerblad's choice of destination. When he was leaving France in 1804, Sweden was still neutral but no great prescience was needed to suspect that it would soon be involved in the wars. Britain could have been an alternative destination; he had, after all, been offered employment in London in the 1780s. It might still have been possible to find something adapted to his skills there, but to survive as a private scholar would have been difficult. In addition he knew that he would have been effectively cut off from the continent during the wars. Whatever the situation of learned exchange in Italy, it was certainly cheaper to be a poor private scholar in Rome than in Paris or London.

Political reasons may also have played a role in Åkerblad's decision not to return to Sweden. A French biographical dictionary from 1834 highlights his disapproval of Swedish political circumstances: "Dissatisfied with the political changes that took place in Sweden at this time [when leaving Paris] he decided, as he had not had any luck there, to break all relations with his fatherland and to go and establish himself in Rome."¹¹ His disillusionment with Swedish politics was certainly real but it is incorrect to say that he broke contact with Sweden.

Once in Turin, Åkerblad was in no hurry to proceed to Livorno to take care of his collection. He spent the winter and spring of 1805 travelling in Northern Italy, visiting Milan and Pavia. After more than three months in Genoa he went to Pisa and Livorno and thereafter he stayed several months in Florence. He eventually arrived in Rome on 24 March 1806, one and a half years after he left Paris. His travel itinerary is virtually the only information we have about this period.¹² He kept his friends in Paris

¹⁰ Åkerblad, Underdånigst Pro Memoria af J. D. Åkerblad, Stockholm 23 August 1800, Kongliga Museum, II Koncept, Äldre handlingar rörande Kongl. Museum 1790–1836, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

¹¹ *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, suppl. t. 56 (Paris, 1834), 118, signed Meldola.

¹² Vat. lat., fol. 69r: "1805 Février . . . Chambéry, 24. départ delà, 27. Turin; Mars 9. départ de Turin, 10. Milan, 26. départ de Milan et arrivé à Pavie, 30 départ de Pavie—Novi; Avril 1. Gênes; Juillet 17. départ de Gênes, 18. Lerici, 20. promenade à Luna—Massa, 22. promenade à Carrare, 23. Pise, 24 Livourne, 25. retour à Pise; Août 3. promenade à la Chartreuse, 16. Lucques, 17. Pise; Septem. 24. Florence; Novem. 9. Pise, 15 Livourne, 20. Pise; 1806. Janv. 8. Florence; Mars 8. Sienne, 21 départ de Sienne, 24. Rome."

informed about his plans; before Åkerblad arrived in Rome, Sacy wrote to a Roman friend asking him to transmit letters to Åkerblad.¹³

Rome and Florence 1806–9

Åkerblad had studied Coptic with Zoëga in 1798–99, and he continued his studies now. Through his connections with the Roman Piranesi family of artists, printers and antiquaries, Åkerblad managed to pass a commission on to Zoëga to catalogue the marbles in the Albani collection.¹⁴

Åkerblad continued to visit libraries and collections, e.g. the Barberini library, where manuscripts on Roman antiquities and Greek travels caught his attention.¹⁵ He surveyed manuscripts and copied a range of inscriptions in the Vatican collections, though this was not without problems. Zoëga described how Åkerblad was almost attacked once: “[Åkerblad] just escaped being manhandled by the masons and employees” when he tried to copy some inscriptions in the corridors of the Vatican museum.¹⁶ A publisher was preparing an edition of the inscriptions and wanted to stop Åkerblad from copying them to avoid competition.

Åkerblad also worked with objects that the British traveller Edward Dodwell had brought with him from Greece. Dodwell arrived in Rome in September 1806. According to Zoëga, Åkerblad intended to explain the inscriptions on some vases in Dodwell’s collection: “we are waiting for the interpretation by the learned traveller Akerblad.”¹⁷ Åkerblad did eventually publish on Dodwell’s objects, but not on the vases. As in the case of continuing work on the Rosetta *Lettre* and his geographic *Mémoire*, he did not fulfil his promise to publish his results.

Another friend of Zoëga’s was the young German classical scholar Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker. Welcker was employed as tutor to the children of Caroline and Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose household was a centre of the German community in Rome. Åkerblad was introduced to this important circle and would remain in contact with German scholars,

¹³ Cancellieri to Sacy, 26 March 1807, Rome, fol. 138, MS 2375, I de F.

¹⁴ Welcker, *Zoëga’s Leben*, 2:193.

¹⁵ Vat. lat., fols. 47rff.

¹⁶ Zoëga to Hermann Schubart, 16 July 1806, Rome, in Zoëga, *Briefe und Dokumente*, letter 1179.

¹⁷ Zoëga, *Li Bassirilievi di Roma incisi da Tommaso Piroli colle illustrazioni di Giorgi Zoëga pubblicati in Roma da Pietro Piranesi*. . . (Rome, 1810), 61. Åkerblad himself hints at a publication on these vases in *Sopra due laminette*, 4.

artists and diplomats until his death.¹⁸ Welcker later became an influential archaeologist and classical scholar. He wrote about how Åkerblad and Dodwell had inspired him with their discussions on Greece. On his way back to Germany in 1808, Welcker visited Åkerblad in Florence where he found him in bed at noon, reading Euripides.¹⁹

Through Sacy's recommendations to his Roman correspondents Åkerblad made the acquaintance of Francesco Cancellieri (1751–1826). From his early youth Cancellieri had published on a wide range of subjects. He personifies the Roman erudite tradition of the time; the bibliography of his printed works comprises 163 items.²⁰ He had had Swedish contacts before; he was, for instance, involved in the production of the Propaganda Fide album given to king Gustav III on his visit to Rome in 1784 (Figure 4). Cancellieri was already aware of Åkerblad's fame and looked forward to meeting him. They became friends and Cancellieri introduced Åkerblad to local scholars and collectors; they would remain in close contact until Åkerblad's death.²¹

Åkerblad told Cancellieri about his plans, and Cancellieri mentioned them in a letter to Sacy in Paris. Åkerblad intended to travel to Florence and then return to Paris, on the condition that there was an "armistice between his [Swedish] Sovereign and your [French] Emperor."²² Åkerblad did leave for Florence in May 1807, but even if the acts of war between France and Sweden had ceased that year, the peace treaty was only signed in 1810, and by then Åkerblad was back in Rome. Åkerblad's friend Paul-Louis Courier was surprised to find him still in Italy in late 1809.²³ Cancellieri's letter to Sacy indicates Åkerblad's intention to go to Paris and take up his oriental studies. Significantly, there is no mention of a return to Sweden. Cancellieri was sad that Åkerblad was leaving: he lost "a dear

¹⁸ Caroline to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 11 March 1809, Rome, in *Wilhelm und Caroline von Humboldt in ihren Briefen*, ed. Anna von Sydow, 7 vols. (Berlin: Mittler, 1906–17), 3:108.

¹⁹ Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker, *Tagebuch einer griechischen Reise*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1865), 1:vii; *Karoline von Humboldt und Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker. Briefwechsel 1807–1826*, ed. Erna Sander-Rindtorff (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1936), 290.

²⁰ Emilio De Tiplado, ed., *Biografia degli italiani illustri nelle scienze, lettere ed arti del secolo XVIII, e de' contemporanei*, 10 vols. (Venice 1834–45), 6:409ff.

²¹ Cancellieri to Sacy, 26 March, 12 April 1807, Rome, fols. 138, 142, MS 2375, I de F; Vat. lat., fol. 31v.

²² Cancellieri to Sacy, 20 May 1807, Rome, fol. 143, MS 2375, I de F.

²³ Courier to JDÅ, 14 October 1809, Milan, in *Courier*, 2:128.

friend" who had already acquired fame in Rome as "the greatest Polyglot of our days."²⁴

Åkerblad was back in Florence in early June 1807.²⁵ He ended up staying for two years. Tuscany was now under direct French sovereignty and the *Junte extraordinaire de Toscane* had been formed by imperial decree on 12 May. In 1809 Napoleon replaced the governor with his sister Élisabeth Bonaparte, who was made Grand Duchess of Tuscany. Like the Papal States Tuscany was divided into French *départements*. Whatever the role of the local governments was, the main power of decision-making remained in Paris.

The French occupation of Italy was long neglected in modern Italian historiography. Recent decades have, however, seen a number of publications dealing with French, and as it is often called, Napoleonic policy in the expanding empire. Several titles have dealt in depth with Italy during the decades after the French revolution. The French occupation and strategies in Italy have recently been the focus of some debate.²⁶

Michael Broers' study *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* uses Edward Said's concept of 'orientalism' in the context of French attitudes and actions in occupied Italy. As briefly discussed above, 'orientalism' has been used to label western attitudes towards the Orient. These attitudes are usually connected to western colonialism and domination. Broers stretches the concept even further. He maintains that French officials in Italy were equipped with 'colonial mindsets' and uses a terminology that has been adapted by western powers in more recent occupations:

Nardon [a French official in Parma] came as close to using the term 'hearts and minds' as the discourse of the day permitted. Nardon's vision, and the terms in which he expressed it, is that this is of a western European talking about other western Europeans and although that vision was rich in revolutionary history, it also contained intimations of a later imperialism. Orientalism was at work in a wholly occidental setting.²⁷

²⁴ Cancellieri to Sacy, 20 May 1807, Rome, fol. 143, MS 2375, I de F.

²⁵ Vat. lat., fol. 69r: "1807. May 30 départ de Rome, Civita Castellana, 31. Terni; Juin 1. Spoleto, Foligno, 2. Pérouse, 3. Cortone, 4. Arezzo, 5. Florence, 16. Pise, pour l'illumination, 17. Florence."

²⁶ See Steven Englund's historiographical review: "Monstre Sacré. The Question of Cultural Imperialism and the Napoleonic Empire," *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 1 (2008): 215–50.

²⁷ Michael Broers, *The Napoleonic Empire in Italy, 1796–1814: Cultural Imperialism in a European Context?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 266.

Broers' book, highly relevant to Åkerblad's years in Italy, is in many respects an excellent survey of the French occupation. However, it raises the question of how and with what results recent historiography has been influenced by the theories of domination and subjugation in the wake of Edward Said's *Orientalism* and the post-colonial field of studies. Broers' exposé of how French occupiers dealt with the Italians, which is the main theme of the book, does not easily fit into a pattern of successful domination based on an 'orientalist' mindset—at least not in comparison with, for instance, later French extra-European colonial experiences. The time frame, in the case of Rome only five years during the turbulent late Napoleonic wars, was not long enough for the French to develop adequate policies or strategies. The question is to what extent can the introduction of a model, designed for other times and circumstances, help us to analyse the *modus operandi* of the French in Italy? Does adopting a variety of 'orientalism' add anything to our understanding? The explanatory power appears insufficient in relation to the nuances lost by comparing Italy to a colonised society outside of Europe. If we agree with Broers' use of 'orientalism' we must also then agree that it has lost its specificity in relation to oriental cultures. The French occupation of Italy must rather be seen in the framework of the long and often conflictual relationship between France and various Italian states; this was not the first time France had invaded the peninsula.

Åkerblad was quickly integrated into scholarly life in Florence. He frequented the salon of Louise von Stolberg, Countess d'Albany. Albany lived in Paris from 1788 together with Italian poet and playwright Count Vittorio Alfieri; they fled to Florence in 1792. Élisabeth Bonaparte, the Grand Duchess, was not happy with the countess' conduct. In addition to the fact that her previous partner Alfieri had been a strong opponent of Napoleon, Albany had forged a new relationship with French painter François Xavier Fabre. The French were often surprised, and at times dismayed, by what they saw as lax sexual morals in Italy.²⁸

Åkerblad had access to Alfieri's books and copied a few verses of Euripides that Alfieri had translated into Italian. Åkerblad was especially fond of Euripides and Alfieri's translation is a fine rendering of the disillusioned speech of Theseus in *Hippolytus*. The verses fit well with the political climate:

²⁸ Ibid., 250ff.

Deh, perché l'uom non porta in fronte scritto	Pray, why doesn't man have written on the forehead,
o il buono, o il tristo? Ond altri ivi scorgesse	who is good or bad? So that others could see
qual sia verace e qual fallace amico.	who is the real and who is the false friend.
Perché non ha due voci? Onde la buona	Why doesn't he have two voices? Where the good one
smentisce ognor cio' che tesse la iniqua, né l'uomo dall'uomo fosse ingannato mai. ³⁰	belies all that the unjust weaves, thus man would never be fooled by man.

Åkerblad also copied a note at the bottom of the page, where Alfieri mocked the French law that imposed the wearing of the cockade: "If Euripides wrote today, he would not have desired this signal to differentiate the good from the bad, considering that the French have invented it by putting the cockade on real Frenchmen, to distinguish them from common men, and chiefly from free men."³⁰ The little tri-coloured button or band, first used in support of the revolution, became a compulsory national symbol during the wars.

Åkerblad worked on Greek literature during his stay in Florence. It was hard to find the modern texts that were necessary for his work with manuscripts. He joined the secular foreign choir that complained about Italian libraries and the difficulties of finding books: "a country where private individuals do not have any or do not lend them and where libraries are run in a way that makes them useless to scholars."³¹

Åkerblad resumed his friendship with Paul-Louis Courier in Florence. They had many interests and opinions in common. Courier was a staunch opponent of the noble estate. He was also an able classical scholar. He had profound knowledge of Greek and Latin, but was in many respects an autodidact lacking historical perspective on ancient literature. Courier's main fame today is as a political writer; he is especially known for his opposition to the Restoration government. He harboured strong antipathy

²⁹ Vat. lat., fol. 67v; Euripides, *Hippolytos*, starting at line 938. The English translation is mine. Alfieri wrote in Samuel Musgrave's edition of 1778, his annotations, pp. 303–4, vol. 1, Alf. 39/1, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence.

³⁰ Vat. lat., fol. 67v.

³¹ JDÅ to Stolberg, 17 July 1811, Rome, in *Albany*, 105. A list makes clear Åkerblad knew the Florentine libraries well. Vat. lat., fol. 45r: "Laurenziana, Magliabechiana, Marucelliana, Badia di Firenze, Anunziata, Archivio diplomatico, Archivio delle riformagioni, S. Marco, S. Maria novella, S. Trinità dei Valombrosani, S. Maria Maggiore."

towards Napoleon. Courier invites divisive interpretations; the one thing everyone seems to agree on is his difficult character. Courier arrived in Italy in 1798 as an officer during the French occupation of Rome, where he and Åkerblad probably met for the first time. Courier was now again in Italy and had participated in the violent campaigns in the south. When his request for a transfer was not accepted he was briefly imprisoned in Naples for insubordination. Courier arrived in Florence for the first time in his life in December 1807. The correspondence between Åkerblad and Courier was frequent but Courier's letters must be read with circumspection. Courier's drafts of the many letters he sent from Italy are collected in a notebook, *Recueil des Cent lettres*. These letters are not in Courier's handwriting and have been edited before being rewritten in the notebook; this is proven in the cases where the original letter is preserved. All of Courier's letters to Åkerblad are from the *Cent lettres* and should therefore be regarded as edited with hindsight.³²

According to Courier, one of Åkerblad's reasons for remaining in Florence might have been amorous: "What is it if not love that embraces him and keeps him by the banks of the great Arno?" In another letter Courier called him "Aristippo Svedese," alluding to the pupil of Socrates, Aristippus, who was founder of the Cyrenaic school of hedonism. Courier also joked about Åkerblad's custom of staying in bed, especially in the cold season: "a cold spell that will make you return under the duvet up to the nose."³³

The French occupation had immediate effects on Florentine life. After the French arrival many religious institutions were suppressed. Tuscany was in great debt and the suppression of religious institutions was mainly a measure to improve the economy. The most important libraries were those of the monasteries and their closure changed working conditions for both resident and foreign scholars.

Access to the collections of Florentine libraries and archives was often a problem. The library of the Badia, the Benedictine abbey, was especially mysterious. Åkerblad had gained the confidence of the monks at

³² NAF 25280, BNF; *Courier*, 1:8f. Courier's correspondence is admirably published by Geneviève Viollet-le-Duc. Previous editions are based on Sautet's 1828 imperfect collection, including the letters published in the 1951 *Pléiade* volume, and should be avoided. All Åkerblad's letters, except one, to Courier are in NAF 25291, BNF, correctly published in *Courier*.

³³ Courier to Furia, 13 May 1808, Livorno, 10 January 1808, Livorno, 82.82.1–2, *Lettere diversi al prof. Francesco del Furia*, Palatina, Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze (hereafter BNCF); Courier to JDÅ, 2 March 1809, Milan, in *Courier*, 2:82.

the Badia and took Courier with him to visit the library. While Åkerblad was consulting the catalogue, Courier found a small manuscript octavo volume. After a closer look he understood that among the texts in the codex were the four books of the second century writer Longus' pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe*. Courier, who already in 1796 had announced that he wanted to translate Longus, knew the text well and realized that there was a passage in the manuscript that was not included in any other edition. Courier had found the desired object of many classical scholars: a new, not yet published piece of an ancient work. Courier did not have enough time to transcribe the manuscript but he did not inform anyone about his find, not even Åkerblad. He was already late in rejoining his regiment in Verona. When he arrived there he was punished for his lateness but was soon transferred, first to Florence and then to Livorno.

The French Junta in Florence comprised Joseph-Marie de Gérando. Gérando was already a wide-ranging writer. He published mainly on philosophy and education. He was also a member of the *Institut* in Paris and thus a *confrère* of Åkerblad. Courier and Åkerblad went to Gérando to plead their case: something ought to be done to avoid the dispersal of the rich patrimony of the suppressed religious institutions. The Junta decided to institute a commission that would survey the libraries and reunite the holdings of the abolished institutions in the Laurenziana library.

Both Åkerblad and Courier were offered membership of the library commission. Courier refused the offer on the grounds that he could not be present in Florence. Åkerblad stated that the fact that he was a foreigner made him unsuitable.³⁴ Supposedly Åkerblad refused not only on the grounds of not being Italian, but also of not being French. Åkerblad could well have had political reasons: if one was to continue living and working in Italy it was a good idea to refuse official French undertakings. Åkerblad might also have reckoned that it was possible that manuscripts, if proven to be of outstanding value, would find their way to the imperial collections in Paris. This was what had happened when Rome was invaded a decade previously. French policy was hardly more benign during Napoleon's imperial rule and another 342 manuscripts were taken from Rome to Paris in 1813.³⁵ As a member of the commission, Åkerblad would have risked becoming an accomplice in French looting. This would

³⁴ Courier, *Lettre a Mr. Renouard. Libraire. Sur une tache faite à un manuscrit de Florence* (Tivoli, 1810), 15.

³⁵ Bignami Odier, *Bibliothèque Vaticane*, 189ff.

not have improved his status with Italian scholars. Nevertheless, Åkerblad followed the work of the commission. The first visits did not come up with any exceptional finds according to Åkerblad: "The commission that you and me should have been members of has so far not found anything really interesting in the suppressed convents, except for the manuscript of a Hebrew bible and a collection of unpublished letters of Machiavelli, Guicciardini and other famous men."³⁶ A couple of weeks later, on 1 December 1808, when the commission visited the Badia library, Åkerblad took part in the proceedings:

Yesterday we did the famous visit at the Benedictines [Badia] to seize their manuscripts, but these rogues had pre-empted us: 26 of the most precious manuscripts had disappeared, among those the beautiful Plutarch that we saw and that you must remember. I am sure that the convent's abbot is innocent of the theft, and that the librarian, little father *Bigi* with his false looks, is without doubt the thief. It is up to us to make him hang, we only have to attest that we saw in his hands a single one of the missing manuscripts, but I confess that I am a good Christian and I do not want the death of the sinner. Anyway it seems cruel to me to hang a poor devil for having stolen some twenty books that, even if they had been moved to the Laurenziana library, no doubt would remain there as virgin and intact as they have been for the last two centuries in the library of these revered fathers.³⁷

Among the many missing codices was a Herodotus manuscript that Åkerblad later noted in the possession of the "despicable" Baron Schellersheim.³⁸ Åkerblad, who was not "a good Christian," nevertheless decided to protect the thief, the librarian Bigi, from the death penalty. Again, a calculation of risks and benefits could have influenced him. Perhaps Åkerblad would not have gained any friends by denouncing the library thief to the French overlords, or maybe he did not find the punishment reasonable. Åkerblad may have counted on at least some of the manuscripts turning up later in private collections or other libraries.

Åkerblad probably expected Courier to be less sympathetic; the French officer had after all been involved in recent massive acts of cruelty during the southern Italian campaigns and might have thought that the life of a single librarian was expendable (Figure 50).

³⁶ JDÅ to Courier, 16 November 1808, Florence, in *Courier*, 2:64–65.

³⁷ JDÅ to Courier, 2 December 1808, Florence, in *Courier*, 2:69.

³⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 June 1817, KVHAA; G. Vitelli, "Schellersheim e i codici greci di Badia," *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 1 (1893): 441–42.

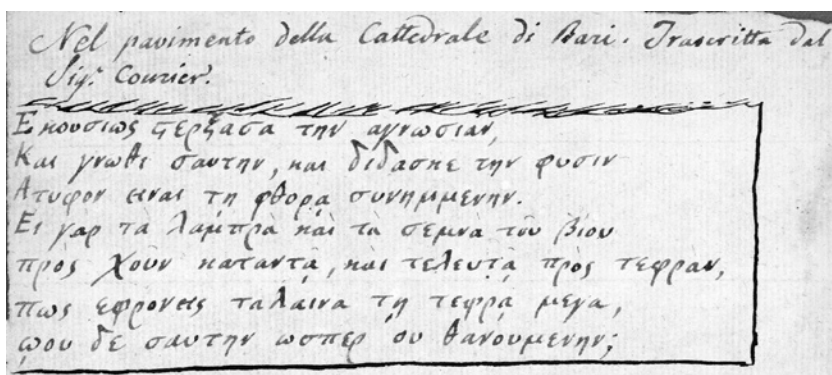


Figure 50. Courier pursued his Greek interests while serving in the Italian south. Åkerblad's copy of a Greek epitaph Courier found in Bari. N72, KB.

Åkerblad was proven right. Courier was less prone to keep the fact to himself. In a quarrel over another Florentine manuscript he did publish his suspicions. He accused the library commission in Florence of not having dealt with the culprits because they did not want to “hurt anyone.”³⁹ But Courier would hardly have been scandalized by the mere theft of the books. When the next instalment of the Florentine *feuilleton* became public, another Italian librarian related a story about Courier’s visit to Parma in 1804 where he tried to steal books. The Parma librarian was convinced of Courier’s culpability and accused him not only of trying to steal books, but also of ripping out the library labels in precious volumes to hide his deed. Courier was at all counts a terrible book borrower.⁴⁰ But Courier’s biographer defended him: “Courier is a soldier, he lives in a conquered country. The Italian people are subjugated but remain hostile and treacherous.” And after another set of circumstantial support to Courier’s acts he concludes: “In this perspective, the character of Courier’s act somewhat changes. It is an act of pillage rather than a theft.”⁴¹

We have heard the argument before, most recently above when a Briton happily justified the seizure of the Rosetta Stone by the fact that it was war booty taken from the French and not a theft from the defenceless Egyptians. Gaschet’s defence of Courier could easily be written off as

³⁹ Courier, *Lettre a Mr. Renouard*, 14.

⁴⁰ Angelo Pezzana to Furia, 2 July, Parma, 82.249.4, *Lettere diversi al prof. Francesco del Furia*, Palatina, BNCF; partly cited in Gaschet, *Jeunesse de Courier*, 501, 195ff; *Courier*, 1159; Joret, *D’Anse de Villosion*, 455–57, 468–70.

⁴¹ Gaschet, *Jeunesse de Courier*, 198.

nationalist historiography. He defended French imperial expansion both at the beginning of the nineteenth century during the Napoleonic wars, and during the early twentieth century when the biography was written. But in relation to Åkerblad it takes on yet another meaning. His status as a foreigner in Italy and the means to work as a scholar were to a great extent made possible by his ability to make friends in all camps. He could not risk appearing to be a member of the occupying forces; neither did he want to lose his contacts with the occupiers.

Courier managed to get out of the army and eventually went back to Florence to work with the Longus manuscript in the autumn of 1809. It was almost two years since he had found the missing passage in the codex at the Badia library, now transferred to the Laurenziana collection. He transcribed the entire text of *Daphnis and Chloe* together with the librarian Francesco del Furia and an assistant. Courier had informed a publisher about his find and agreed upon the publication of the fragment. The find of the unknown passage was announced in journals in both Florence and Milan to make advance publicity for the printed book that was expected to follow shortly.

On 10 November, when Courier returned the manuscript to the librarian after a long day's work, Furia removed a loose sheet of paper that Courier had used as a bookmark and discovered to his horror: "oh Heavens! how frightened I was, how great was my pain, when I saw that the sheet was attached to a page in the manuscript, and that it was stained by a lot of very dense ink... it was exactly the same page where the Supplement to the Lacuna was found."⁴² The minute text of the manuscript had already been very difficult to read before the destruction of this particular passage (Figure 51).

Courier, explaining and excusing himself in various reprises, maintained that while distracted he had put an ink-soiled sheet of paper as a marker in the manuscript. This had been enough to completely blot out the lines containing the unpublished parts. However, Courier had transcribed the missing part before the incident and Furia immediately asked him for a copy of the missing fragment. Courier was not going to furnish such a copy easily.

⁴² Francesco del Furia, "Della scoperta, e subitanea perdita di una parte inedita del primo libro dei Pastoralis di Longo ec.—Lettera del Sig. Franceso del Furia Bibliotecario della Laurenziana. Al Signor Domenico Valeriano," *Giornale enciclopedico* 2 (1810): 134. Many of the documents pertaining to the polemic, including Furia's letter and Courier's pamphlet are published in *Courier*, vol. 2.



Figure 51. The photograph makes the thirteenth century manuscript (on paper) appear more readable than it is in reality. The pages are c. 17 × 13 cm. Recent attempts to read the destroyed text have not been successful. Fols. 23v–24r, Conv. Soppr. 627, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence. Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali.

The episode was immediately picked up by the papers and attracted the attention of a public usually uninterested in the publication of lost Greek literature. The story was too good: a French officer, formerly member of the occupation forces, had destroyed a priceless Italian manuscript. Adding insult to injury, Courier refused to share the copy of the text he had destroyed.

The quarrel spread on all fronts. Furia published 'letters' attacking Courier, who printed a defence in the form of an extremely incisive pamphlet, which failed to earn him new friends. Åkerblad was already in Rome and could only follow the affair at a distance. Some of Courier's friends in Rome broke off relations with him, among them his and Åkerblad's mutual friend, painter and writer Marianna Candidi Dionigi.

Åkerblad had problems with his own position. He ran the risk of being associated with Courier's acts. Åkerblad was referred to and cited many times in Courier's pamphlet. When Furia sent his publication on the inkblot to Åkerblad, he answered and tried to defend his friend from the accusation of deliberately destroying the manuscript:

The conduct of Courier is certainly more than strange, nevertheless I would think that a certain lightness of character and carelessness, traits that everybody who knows him have observed, is the reason for the notorious occurrence rather than wickedness, of which, having known Courier for a long time, I have never found proof.⁴³

Courier eventually published the fragment, but the ink-blot affair tainted his reputation and continued to be used by his detractors until his murder in 1825. In Rome the *Daphnis and Chloe* passage would follow Åkerblad and his friend Sebastiano Ciampi for several years (p. 329f). The incident, including its public appeal, highlighted a range of issues. It is tempting to compare the destruction of the page of the Longus manuscript with the disappearance and theft of the many codices in the Badia library, which was a graver crime against the Florentine patrimony of ancient texts. In his pamphlet Courier pointed out that if the missing Plutarch from the Badia had contained parts of a life of the Theban general Epaminondas, as he thought it did, it would have been a considerably more important find than the lost passage of the Longus romance.⁴⁴

Courier's behaviour, and the fact that he was an officer in the occupying forces, was clearly a core element in the affair. It is difficult to imagine the events taking this turn if a local had destroyed the page. The different course that the thefts of the manuscripts took is a confirmation of this.

⁴³ JDÅ to Furia, 28 July 1810, Rome, 82.4.1, Lettere diversi al prof. Francesco del Furia, Palatina, BNCF; printed incomplete in Gaschet, *Jeunesse de Courier*, 505.

⁴⁴ Courier, *Lettre a Mr. Renouard*, 14.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

ANTIQUARIAN IN ROME

Åkerblad left Florence on 21 March 1809 and arrived in Rome a couple of days later. His intention was to remain there for some time and he wrote to Courier: "I have anchored up, and I hope for a long time, in Rome, where I have recovered my books that I had not seen for ten years."¹

When Åkerblad settled in Rome in 1809 his travelling years were over. He was now in his mid-forties and for the first time since his early twenties he was going to stay in the same place for more than a couple of years. Recounting Åkerblad's Roman decade in a chronological order would be more repetitive than the rendering of his earlier travels and scientific work. Moreover, whereas his diplomatic postings and travels made it easy to contextualise his career with geographic definitions, this is not possible for his long stay in Rome. Instead this decade is described thematically and in the form of a series of *tableaux*, discussing Åkerblad and his colleagues' work and social relations.

Åkerblad's Italian years have been overlooked by previous biographers. In biographical entries they are condensed to a couple of phrases, where at best his involvement in Greek studies and archaeology is mentioned. Callmer did little to investigate sources other than Åkerblad's own correspondence. He did not read Åkerblad's publications for anything else than their professed subject matter of Greek and Phoenician epigraphy, and did not know of Åkerblad's correspondences with, for instance, Paul-Louis Courier and Champollion.² According to Callmer, Åkerblad's Roman existence was characterized by a certain laziness.

Callmer only vaguely hints at Åkerblad's and his friends' amorous liaisons, and he makes no comment on the political vicissitudes during the French occupation; in short, Callmer presents a sanitized image of Åkerblad. Perhaps he wanted to restore Åkerblad's reputation, considering that it was tainted by his supposed rejection of Sweden. Yet, on the basis of

¹ Vat. lat., fol. 70r; JDÅ to Courier, 21 June 1809, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:95.

² Callmer became aware of Åkerblad's friendship with Courier after the publication of his 1952 essay on Åkerblad: Callmer, "J. D. Åkerblad et la France," *Cahiers Paul-Louis Courier*, no. 4, 1970, 39–42. This information was not added when the essay was reprinted in *Callmer*.

new archival material this supposed rejection can be safely refuted. In the present historiographic context there is no reason to avoid the personal issues. These are undoubtedly important for understanding Åkerblad's situation as a scholar in a self-imposed exile.

Sources other than Åkerblad's correspondence help us to overcome the impression that he was lazy. Cross-checking the information in the letters allows another picture to emerge. Åkerblad did a surprising amount of things in Rome, but few traces were left in his publication record. His opportunities to publish were restricted by his precarious finances. But Callmer did have a point to a certain degree. Some of Åkerblad's Roman colleagues published profusely during the exact same years that Åkerblad produced only a few dissertations. The reasons for this will be discussed below.

Åkerblad was also frequently visited by oriental scholars, making him into a sort of centre for oriental studies in Rome. Anyone with the least interest in oriental or Egyptian matters would seek out Åkerblad. He participated in all the institutional contexts in Rome that were open to him. He was a member of the academies related to his fields: the archaeological academy, the art academy *San Luca* and the literary *Arcadia*. He also made friends with the upper echelons of the learned Roman clergy.

Remaining in the same place also changed Åkerblad's social life. For the first time in his adult life he had the time and possibility to maintain longer relationships. He was a frequent visitor to many of the Roman salons, both within learned and artistic circles and those of the nobility. During the French occupation he also made friends with French administrators. The fact that he was a member of the prestigious *Institut National* in Paris was certainly an advantage.

Rome's intellectual circles were different from many other European capitals. The strong presence of the clergy in academies and in scientific and social life in general was their main distinguishing feature.³

Rome had been under French rule since January 1808 but, at least according to the French, only under 'worldly' sovereignty. The pope was nominally still in power as the leader of the church. In June 1809 Rome was finally incorporated into the French Empire. The Papal States did not become a new Italian satellite kingdom but were, like Tuscany,

³ Maria Pia Donato, "Accademie e accademismi in una capitale particolare. Il caso di Roma, secoli XVIII–XIX," *MEFRIM. Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 111 (1999): 415–43.

transformed into French *départements* and in theory administered as a part of France proper. In July Pope Pius VII, who had been an active promoter of Rome's scientific and cultural life, was arrested and exiled. The situation was superficially similar to that of 1798, when Åkerblad had arrived in Rome during the final French takeover of the city. The *quin-quennio*, that is the five years of French rule in 1809–14, was to have a big impact on many areas of Åkerblad's interest.

For chronicles of daily life and the actual running of the city most authors who have written about the period refer to Louis Madelin's classic 1906 study: *La Rome de Napoléon : la domination française à Rome de 1809 a 1814*. However, Madelin should be read with caution.⁴ Although there are studies documenting various aspects of the French Roman rule, there is no updated synthesis of the French occupation of Rome.

The most important source for Åkerblad's Roman years is his correspondence with Sebastiano Ciampi (1769–1847). Ciampi presented a collection of 54 of Åkerblad's letters to the Stockholm antiquities academy in 1828, knowing that Åkerblad had been a member. Fifteen letters were forgotten or excluded and remained in the papers that Ciampi bequeathed to the Forteguerriana library in his native town of Pistoia. Callmer did not know about these Italian letters. A couple of additional letters can be found in other collections. As usual there are no original letters addressed to Åkerblad, the correspondence is again one-sided. The letters to Ciampi concerned to a large extent their common interests, mainly Greek literature and language. Nevertheless, it is the richest source on Åkerblad's Roman life. Their exchange was frank and often dealt with private matters.⁵

⁴ Paris: Plon, 1906. Madelin asserts, for instance, that the guillotine was first used in Rome in 1813 when brigandage was rampant, 597. According to the list compiled by Maestro Titta, the Roman executioner, the guillotine was used already in December 1810. *Le annotazioni di Mastro Titta carnefice romano...*, ed. Alessandro Ademollo (Città di Castello, 1886).

⁵ The letters in the Stockholm collection are bound chronologically. All Åkerblad's letters are dated Rome, some lack the year, and when the calendar date is missing the post stamp date, if available, has been used. A couple of letters have been bound in wrong chronological order, which led to a few errors in Callmer's narrative that are noted when relevant. Shelf mark: Sebastiano Ciampis samling, Acc 1828, abbreviated KVHAA. The remaining letters in Biblioteca Comunale Forteguerriana, Raccolta Sebastiano Ciampi, Cassetta E. 368, abbreviated Forteg. 2 other letters: Rome 17 February 1812, bound with Sacy's and Åkerblad's Rosetta publications, shelf mark C.28.i.5, BL; 1 September 1813, Rome, Autografsamlingen, KB. Drafts of Ciampi's letters to Åkerblad, 25 August 1809, Pisa, E. 390, Forteg.; 12 January 1814, Pisa, KVHAA.

Sebastiano Ciampi was a professor in Pisa when Åkerblad met him in Rome.⁶ He wrote about many things, sometimes too quickly. He was mildly rebuked by Åkerblad, who in turn wrote little during the same years. They did, however, form a strong bond, as is shown by the frequency and longevity of their correspondence. Before they met, Åkerblad was more than dubious about Ciampi's knowledge of Greek. When Åkerblad wrote about a Greek inscription found in Fiesole, he commented ironically on Ciampi's explanation of it: "Professor Ciampi has published a precise explanation of it that only proves his incredible ignorance," finishing off his own reading of the inscription with: "Oh, what a learned professor!"⁷

The Italian scholar Sebastiano Timpanaro, among many things a historian of philology and linguistics, called Ciampi a "poligrafo arruffone," a prolific writer who muddles in everything.⁸ B. G. Niebuhr (son of Carsten) attended a lecture given by Ciampi in Florence in 1816. He found him better than, for example, the librarian Furia, whom he did not even consider a philologist, but nevertheless quipped: "he would [in Germany] at the most be considered suitable for a subordinate teaching position in a gymnasium."⁹ It is easy to forget that Ciampi was also an *abate* and nominally part of the clergy. The term refers here to a person with theological training connected to the church, not to the office of the head of a monastery. The Italian scholars were often *abati*, and even if they were not officiating or practising, they could of course not marry. This became an issue when the authorities in Pisa attempted to force Ciampi to leave the woman with whom he cohabited.¹⁰

Åkerblad and Ciampi's correspondence was frequent from 1809 until 1817, when Ciampi left Italy for a professorship at the university of Warsaw.

⁶ On Ciampi see: Giuliana Bonacchi Gazzarini, *Sebastiano Ciampi nella storiografia artistica tra il settecento e l'ottocento* (Pistoia: Società Pistoiese di Storia Patria, 1970); DBI; on Ciampi's papers and correspondence: Maria Solleciti, *Le carte di Sebastiano Ciampi nella biblioteca comunale Forteguerriana* (Pistoia: Società Pistoiese di Storia Patria, 1984).

⁷ Vat. lat., 45v.

⁸ Sebastiano Timpanaro, *La filologia di Giacomo Leopardi*, 2nd rev. ed. (Bari: Laterza, 1978), 33.

⁹ Barthold Georg Niebuhr to the Berlin Academy of Sciences, 23 September 1816, Florence, in Niebuhr, *Briefe: neue Folge, 1816–1830. Band 1: Briefe aus Rom (1816–1823)*, ed. Eduard Vischer (Bern: Francke, 1981), 75.

¹⁰ There are numerous passages in Åkerblad's letters dealing with this matter. Ciampi was exasperated by the affair to the point of wanting to leave his post as professor at the university, something that Åkerblad repeatedly tried to dissuade him from doing. When Ciampi eventually left Pisa for Poland he brought his partner with him to Warsaw. The whole affair is recounted in Ciampi's unpublished MS autobiography *Ecce Homo*, E 361, Forteg. See also Bonacchi Gazzarini, *Ciampi nella storiografia*.

This was a position that Åkerblad had almost single-handedly procured for Ciampi through his connections with Polish and Russian nobles in Rome.

Ciampi recorded his first meeting with Åkerblad in 1809:

Oh what an erudite Man and connoisseur of antiquity! Oh what command does he have of not only Greek, and Latin, but also of Arabic, Cufic, and other ancient and modern languages! But all these merits only serve to make him ever more eager for knowledge and ever more affable. He is really a second Ulysses... You hear him talk of Greece and Egypt as if he was an erudite of the country. His portfolio is a treasure of written monuments, inscriptions and stones that were hidden in the heaps of ancient ruins, collected and explained by him. Imagine yourself how many beautiful things he told me.¹¹

Such was the praise that Ciampi published in the newly founded *Giornale enciclopedico* in Florence. It survived for only a few years before its publisher, Molini, folded, in a fate common to publishers of periodicals. Editors who shied away from journals could do better. Another Pisan publisher friend was more fortunate, as Åkerblad wrote: "I enjoy seeing him treat as trifles certain sums of money that to a professor of our sapienza [the Roman University] would seem like [the riches of] Peru; this proves that the printer makes more than the writer."¹²

When Åkerblad had received the *Giornale enciclopedico*, he wrote that Ciampi instead should have mentioned: "real scholars who publish."¹³ To what extent flattery worked with Åkerblad is an open question. He was considered quite vain by some of his detractors. Before reading Ciampi's article Åkerblad had already tried to put in a word for him. The member of the French Junta in Florence, Gérando, whom Åkerblad and Courier had approached about the trafficking of manuscripts, had been transferred to Rome. He was now a member of the *Consulta straordinaria per gli Stati Romani*, the initial French governing body in Rome, usually called simply the *Consulta*. He told Ciampi that Gérando, at his instigation, had written to the Grand Duchess in Florence to recommend Ciampi for the post

¹¹ Sebastiano Ciampi, "Epistola filologica del sig. Ab. Sebastiano Ciampi al Ch. sig. Francesco Tolomei, Maire de Pistoja e Console della Imperiale Accademia Scienze ed Arti della medesima Città," *Giornale enciclopedico* 1 (1809): 233. Ciampi probably confused Cufic (an early Arabic script) with Coptic.

¹² JDÅ to Ciampi, 24 May 1813, KVHAA. Åkerblad was referring to the editor, professor and writer Giovanni Rosini (1776–1855) who himself mentioned Åkerblad: *Elogio di Teresa Pelli Fabroni* (Pisa, 1813), 101.

¹³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 18 November 1809, KVHAA.

of Etruscan professor at the university in Florence.¹⁴ Åkerblad continued over the years to use his influence the best he could in Ciampi's favour. He promised Ciampi that he would try to put in a word with another French acquaintance, naturalist Georges Cuvier who had been sent out from Paris to reorganize the university in Pisa.¹⁵

A sign of Åkerblad's familiarity with Gérando is that he used his address to receive his mail, relying on the fact that post to one of Rome's governors would be conveyed faster and more safely than a common letter addressed to a private individual.¹⁶ He had a point. A letter to Åkerblad had been stuck at the post office for a month and a half, even though he had sent a servant there every day:

I went to the director of the post to complain about such negligence, after having investigated the matter he finally excused himself that because, in contrast to the norm, my family name on the address of this letter was preceded by a Christian name, so it remained with the letters to all *Giovanni* in Rome, so that the clerks, who hardly know how to read, had not noticed the surname. I had to content myself with this terrible excuse.¹⁷

When Åkerblad arrived in Rome he first lived at Piazza di Spagna.¹⁸ His first years were busy socializing, especially in foreign circles. He immediately re-joined the German community with which he had associated during his previous years in Rome. The Prussian minister in Rome, Wilhelm von Humboldt, had left Rome in October 1808 to take up the position of education minister in Berlin. His wife Caroline stayed on with the children in their apartment in via Condotti, the main street leading up to the Spanish steps. This was the area where many foreigners lived in Rome. She wrote to Welcker who was back in Germany:

I have given away the apartment below where Humboldt and Kohlrausch lived. I wanted to return it to the old landlord because I was not using it. However, at the same moment Åkerblad urged me to leave it to him which I did. But I have had all internal communications closed, and he can only come to me via the main stairs. You see that I live close to the greatest learning. I must give Åkerblad the benefit of being a very calm neighbour.

¹⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 30 August 1809, KVHAA.

¹⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 18 November 1809; 6 May 1813, KVHAA. Grazia Tomasi Stussi, "Per la storia dell'Accademia imperiale di Pisa (1810–1814)," *Critica storica* 20 (1983): 60–120.

¹⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 8 September 1810, KVHAA.

¹⁷ JDÅ to Furia, 28 July 1810, Rome, 82.4.2, Lettere diversi al prof. Francesco del Furia, Palatina, BNCF.

¹⁸ At number 78. JDÅ to Courier, 21 June 1809, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:95.

He is also amusing and good company but you never get close to him, in any language. It is also good so.¹⁹

It is probable that the passage about blocking the internal communications between the apartments was a reference to Åkerblad's reputation as a ladies' man. Many foreigners gathered in the Humboldt house, not only Germans but also French and other nationalities; for example, the Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen was a close friend of the Humboldts.

This drawing shows how Thorvaldsen could have been inspired by Humboldt's ruminations on physiognomy and how 'typical' physical traits, like the face and the shape of the head were important markers of character (Figure 52). Humboldt had, for instance, met Gérando in 1799 and wrote: "Tall, slender and lean. A long and yet... not narrow face. ... The bones above the eyes are strong, up until the temples, giving an apparent expression of weakness. ... French in the strong backward inclination of the forehead and the broad overall spread of the facial traits."²⁰



Figure 52. Thorvaldsen. Left: Wilhelm von Humboldt; right: Georg Zoëga. C79v, Thorvaldsens Museum.

¹⁹ Caroline von Humboldt to Welcker, 3 November 1809, Rome, in Humboldt and Welcker, *Briefwechsel*, 65.

²⁰ *Wilhelm von Humboldts Gesammelte Schriften. Band 15, Tagebücher. Zweiter Band. 1799–1835*, ed. Albert Leitzmann (Berlin: Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1918), 42.

Åkerblad arrived in Rome shortly after the death of his admired teacher and fellow Coptic scholar, Zoëga. He wrote an epitaph for Zoëga's grave, inspired by Euripides; he knew "how much my late friend loved the tragic poet."²¹ Ciampi wanted to publish the epitaph, but as Åkerblad knew that the possibility of having it incised on Zoëga's stone was close to zero, he prayed Ciampi to abstain. Åkerblad had told Caroline von Humboldt that Zoëga wanted to be buried near the Pyramid, at the non-Catholic cemetery by the San Paolo gate. She found this strange; as Zoëga had married an Italian woman and converted to Catholicism the wish for a non-Catholic burial does appear unrealistic. Instead Zoëga was buried nearby in the "dark church" of Sant'Andrea delle Fratte. Åkerblad was of solace to Caroline: "It is anyhow a comfort that he is here, but the deep calm knowledge of Zoëga was greater." Åkerblad remained in contact with the Humboldt family after they left Rome.²²

At the beginning of his stay in Rome, Åkerblad was occupied with his memorial on Egyptian geography, which he sent to Sacy in Paris. The rhythm of scientific publications played to a different beat in Rome compared to, for example, Paris. There were no learned journals. If one wanted to publish, it had to be on one's own initiative, and it was up to the individual scholar to procure funds to pay for production and printing.

Publishing and printing in Rome were relatively expensive. Paper was highly taxed and the printers were craftsmen rather than accomplished publishers. Rome had little of the market-oriented entrepreneurship of London or Paris printers and publishing houses. Most printing shops were dependent on the state and religious institutions. For his 1811 and 1817 dissertations Åkerblad used the printer Francesco Bourglié, who was the director of the Propaganda Fide printing works until the French finally suppressed them in 1812. Bourglié continued his activities privately.

Printers constantly lacked typefaces and foreign characters. The Propaganda's typefaces had been confiscated twice by the French, first for the Egyptian invasion and later to supply the *Imprimerie Impériale* in Paris. When the Propaganda's printing works were closed down, a third batch of oriental typefaces was sent to Paris and printing in Coptic, Arabic etc. became difficult in Rome. For his 1813 treatise Åkerblad used Lino Contadini, director of the Ospizio di S. Michele's print shop who also printed

²¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 30 August 1809, KVHAA. The epigraphy in *Callmer*, 210

²² Caroline to Wilhelm von Humboldt, Rome 1 April 1809, in Humboldt, *Briefen*, 3:124–25; *Caroline von Humboldt und Christian Daniel Rauch. Ein Briefwechsel 1811–1828*, ed. Jutta von Simson (Berlin: Mann, 1999), 127, 136, 153, 199.

books on the side.²³ Åkerblad, who would have needed other typefaces than those available, resorted to writing Hebrew, Phoenician and Samaritan letters with Latin characters. He found the printing process “extremely annoying.”²⁴

Printing difficulties were one of the factors that resulted in Åkerblad’s low output during the Roman years. It is in this context that Åkerblad appears in Maria Pia Donato’s interesting book about the academies and intellectual pursuits in Rome, *Accademie romane: una storia sociale, 1671–1824*. Donato accuses him and his colleagues of failing to adjust to new methods and styles of writing about antiquity and history. She refers to the published proceedings of the Roman archaeological academy, where a 1811 treatise of Åkerblad’s was reprinted in 1821: “even though many arguments are treated, they show in the major part the typical antiquarian cut of the glorious Roman tradition.”²⁵ Donato is partly right in her judgement and Åkerblad himself would probably have agreed.

In a letter to Ciampi, Åkerblad explicitly explained why he had adopted this style of writing about antiquity for his first Roman publication. He writes about the dissertation that Donato refers to, touching on several aspects of the later criticism:

As I had to do something for a certain academy of Archaeology created last year by Mr. Degerando, I composed a dissertation on a thin plate incised with Greek letters to be read in that academy. But because my dear academicians, speaking with due respect, do not understand much about Greek antiquity, I considered it appropriate to print this trifle to be able to send it to some friends in Italy and abroad. ... However, I warn you about two things: the first is that I have made the dissertation longer than it should be, wanting to imitate the manners of Italian antiquarians, with all their digressions, their wanderings off topic, episodes, notes, quotations &c &c. If I had written it in French it would have been shorter by three quarters.²⁶

Åkerblad knew that the type of writing he indulged in was part of an obsolete tradition, but he could not escape from it. ‘Antiquaria’ often had, and

²³ Maria Iolanda Palazzolo, *Editoria e istituzioni a Roma tra Settecento e Ottocento* (Rome: Archivio Guido Izzi, 1994).

²⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 8 July 1811, KVHAA.

²⁵ Maria Pia Donato, *Accademie romane: una storia sociale, 1671–1824* (Naples: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 2000), 218. For a positive judgment on Åkerblad’s essay: Maria Letizia Lazzarini, “Gli studi di epigrafia e antichità greche,” in *I duecento anni di attività della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia (1810–2010)*, ed. Marco Buonocore (Rome: Quasar, 2010), 251f.

²⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 8 July 1811, KVHAA.

still has, a pejorative ring to it. This was of course known to Åkerblad and his colleagues. Åkerblad had earlier admitted that he himself wrote too briefly, for instance in the case of the runes on the Venice lion. Now he felt that he was guilty of the reverse, by imitating the 'Italian style.' He had outlined his programme before, and in his next letter to Ciampi it was repeated: "Few pages, many beautiful investigations; that is how I like books."²⁷ In this he was the opposite of many Italian writers. Ciampi published uninterruptedly and about the most varied subjects. Åkerblad was perhaps envious of Ciampi's prolific production, but at the same time cautiously critical of his haste:

I admire, and almost envy the extreme facility which you have for making thick volumes full of thousands and thousands of curious facts, at the same time as I am ashamed of my own poor little silly thing of a few pages that cost me such an effort that the profession of writer disgusts me. You together with our mutual friend [Cancellieri] have the blessed facility to write a lot, and well, please give us soon your Kypselos chest, because while I am a lazy writer I am at least the most indefatigable reader in the world.²⁸

A couple of years earlier Ciampi had announced his intention to translate the whole of Pausanias' *Description of Greece*. Åkerblad tried to dissuade him. According to Åkerblad it was a much too long and complicated work that demanded enormous learning and knowledge on the part of the translator. Now the project had been pared down to Pausanias' long description of the so-called Kypselos ivory chest, which he had seen in the treasury in Delphi during his voyages in the second century.

Cancellieri was also extremely productive and Åkerblad was similarly straightforward when commenting on his publishing ventures. Except for the quality and style of the publications, very much in the glorious tradition of Roman antiquaries as Donato would have put it, there was also the question of selling the books: "I cannot understand how he can write so quickly and how he finds the money to print his things, because nothing sells, everything is given to the friends here, or sent by post to those absent."²⁹

Another type of trade that occurred involved inscriptions. Travellers to Rome often went to Åkerblad, who was an exceptional epigrapher, to have their inscriptions read and commented upon (Figure 53). The

²⁷ JDÅ to Ciampi, 1 August 1811, KVHAA.

²⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 12 Februari 1814, KVHAA.

²⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 24 May 1813, KVHAA.



Figure 53. Åkerblad's copies of inscriptions from William Gell's collection. Fol. 6or, Vat. lat., 9785. © BAV.

Prussian minister in Rome, Barthold Georg Niebuhr, tried to get Åkerblad elected to the Berlin science academy in exchange for contributions to the Berlin inscription corpus, but was unsuccessful. Many of the inscriptions Åkerblad himself had collected in Greece nevertheless eventually entered the corpora of published inscriptions that were formed in the first half of the nineteenth century.³⁰

Åkerblad happily criticized fellow scholars for their deficiencies in style and content, and for the endless repetition of already published material. An example of this is his comments about Giovanni Battista Zannoni (1774–1832), who worked at the archaeological museum in Florence:

Everyone knows how easy it is to find quotations, especially about things as famous as the statues and gemme in Florence. How much better he would have done... by hiding his erudition and by giving new and ingenious reflections. But this is a very difficult thing, and nothing is easier than copying Greek passages already cited thousands of times. But let this remain between us.³¹

At a certain point Ciampi got upset with Åkerblad for berating a Florentine journal. Åkerblad answered by outlining some rules for correspondence between friends. He seems to imply that the news that Ciampi had communicated must be accepted for scrutiny, otherwise it was meaningless to exchange opinions: “writing to a friend I do not have any scruples to state my opinion on the literary issues you have communicated; if this liberty is disagreeable to you I will be more prudent.”³² Åkerblad was always supportive of Ciampi and mild in his criticism. However, Ciampi was not a fool and could easily interpret Åkerblad’s general apprehension of Italian scholars as implicit critique of his own sometimes excessive haste in publishing.

Did the fact that Åkerblad was not completely integrated into the Italian community make it easier for him to have a distanced view on local scholarly work? He also voiced a common complaint about the dilettantism

³⁰ *Callmer* is exhaustive on Åkerblad’s role as an epigrapher. Charles Robert Cockerell, *Travels in Southern Europe and the Levant 1810–1817: The Journal of C. R. Cockerell, RA, edited by his son Samuel Pepys Cockerell* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903, repr. 1999), 274; Ernest A. Gardner, “Inscriptions Copied by Cockerell in Greece,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 6 (1885): 144. Niebuhr to the Berlin science academy, 10 December 1816, Rome, in Niebuhr, *Briefen*, 108f. Åkerblad’s inscriptions in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, Berlin 1828–, no. 2156, 2158, 2160, 2217, 2221, 2222, 2228, 2237.

³¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 February 1812, bound with Sacy’s and Åkerblad’s Rosetta publications, shelf mark C.28.1.5, BL.

³² JDÅ to Ciampi, 2 April 1812, KVHAA.

of self-appointed antiquarians, who apparently did not believe that deep knowledge was required to write on antiquarian matters. Åkerblad did not agree:

What displeases me is that this author, who is a worthy man in every other respect, learned and amiable, discusses things he does not know. Not having studied physics or geometry no one would dare to print books on these sciences; is antiquaria such an easy thing that everyone can speak to his talent about it without having even minimal knowledge?³³

But all Italian scholars were, as Åkerblad well knew, not dilettantes. Francesco Cancellieri had passed on a manuscript by a young philological scholar to Åkerblad. Åkerblad read it, made some comments and sent it back with a letter, which Cancellieri partly published in one of his compendiums of sundry notes:

It seems to me that such an erudite work by a youth of so tender age is greatly auspicious for Italy, that can hope to see one day appear a really distinguished Philologist that can be compared to those this beautiful country once had and also to those that German and Holland still can be proud of.³⁴

Further on in the letter Åkerblad was more straightforward in his judgement of the young scholar's work, but he asked Cancellieri to only praise and encourage the teenage scholar Giacomo Leopardi.³⁵ Leopardi, who started out as a precocious philologist, would a few years after Åkerblad's death become known as a poet. His fame as the greatest Italian Romantic poet is undisputed.

Leopardi came from a provincial noble family in the Marche and lived at the family seat in Recanati. According to Åkerblad, this was one of the problems. Leopardi had made errors that could have been avoided if he had had access to a decent library. Åkerblad's advice was to let Leopardi

³³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 July 1817, KVHAA. The person in question was Alessandro Visconti, physician and brother of the two antiquarians, Ennio Quirino and Filippo Aurelio. He had published a treatise Åkerblad found ludicrous: *Lettera . . . sopra alcuni vasi sepolcrali rinvenuti nelle vicinanze della antica Alba-Longa* (Rome, 1817).

³⁴ Francesco Cancellieri, *Dissertazione di Francesco Cancellieri intorno agli uomini dotati di gran memoria ed a quelli divenuti smemorati*. . . (Rome, 1815), 90.

³⁵ JDÅ to Cancellieri, 16 January 1815, Rome. Cancellieri immediately forwarded Åkerblad's comments to Leopardi's uncle in Rome. Cancellieri to Marchese Carlo Antici, 17 January 1815. Both in *Carteggio, inedito di varii con Giacomo Leopardi, con lettere che lo riguardano*, ed. Giovanni Bresciano and Raffaele Bresciano (Turin: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1932), 469, 471. For Leopardi's philological works see: Timpanaro, *Leopardi filologo*, on Åkerblad, 14f.

come to Rome to work with manuscripts. Åkerblad's appreciative but honest critique was communicated to Leopardi, who received it happily, even if it was not entirely positive. It provided another argument for him to try to get away from Recanati. Åkerblad repeated his praise to Leopardi's relatives in Rome. As a result, Leopardi's uncle in Rome, Carlo Antici, suggested to Leopardi's father that young Giacomo should be allowed to travel to Rome, referring to Åkerblad's advice.³⁶ Leopardi's family, however, would not let him go. The stifling milieu of Leopardi's upbringing is a central theme in many of the works about him.

A couple of years later Leopardi was notified of Åkerblad's death: "At this moment I have had news from Rome that makes me quite sad, the sudden death of the Swede Ackerblad that you already know as the most learned man there, from whom, having had some friendship with him, one could have hoped to learn many things."³⁷ Leopardi had also written to his uncle, lamenting the death of Åkerblad. Antici's virulent response to Åkerblad's lack of faith is cited above: it was Antici who wrote that Åkerblad was a "terrible irreparable disaster" and that he had done nothing for learning (p. 104).

Leopardi eventually came to Rome. He was scathing about the cultural milieu he found there and some of Åkerblad's friends. When Leopardi met Cancellieri in person, he wrote candidly that he was "a river of chatter, the most boring and hopeless man on earth." Another friend of Åkerblad's, the painter and writer Marianna Candidi Dionigi, was a "very disgusting, stupid, pompous old woman."³⁸ The difference in age was certainly a factor, Cancellieri was almost fifty years and Candidi more than forty years his senior.

Etruscherie

Many foreigners had criticized Italian scholars or, like Wilhelm von Humboldt, even asserted that such a thing did not exist. The Italians defended

³⁶ Leopardi to Cancellieri, 15 April 1815, Recanati; 15 July 1815, Recanati, in Leopardi, *Epistolario*, 1:11, 14. See also Leopardi to Pietro Giordano, 30 May 1817, *ibid.*, 1:106. It also appears that Åkerblad wrote personally to Leopardi, but the letter/s have not been found. Carlo and Paolina Leopardi to Leopardi, 30 November 1825, Recanati, *ibid.*, 1:101; Antici to Leopardi, Rome 6 May 1818, *ibid.*, 1:193. Antici to Monaldo Leopardi, January 1815, Rome, in Leopardi, *Carteggio*, 472.

³⁷ Leopardi to Giordano, 19 February 1819, Recanati, in Leopardi, *Epistolario*, 1:260.

³⁸ Leopardi to his brother Carlo, 25 November 1822, Rome, in *ibid.*, 1:565; to his sister Paolina, 19 March 1823, Rome, *ibid.*, 1:677.

themselves as we saw in, for instance, the case of Bossi and the runic inscriptions. Academic quarrels between Italians and foreigners were, however, often less acrimonious than the battles which occurred between Italian scholars themselves.

Even if Åkerblad was well-integrated, his criticism of Italian scholars was that of an outsider. The intellectual fights he witnessed could be fierce and he perceived that there were great differences between the strategies of, for instance, Florentine and Roman scholars. This became especially obvious in the debate on Giuseppe Micali's (1769–1844) *L'Italia avanti il dominio dei Romani* [*Italy before the rule of the Romans*] published in four volumes in 1810. The work was widely discussed and is mentioned many times in Åkerblad's correspondence. Micali was an acquaintance of both Åkerblad and Ciampi. Åkerblad probably met him during his time in Livorno and they remained in contact; Åkerblad refers to their correspondence well into the 1810s. The debate on Micali's book is exemplary; it provides a pattern-card of the issues that occupied Åkerblad and his colleagues both in Rome and Florence.

Micali came from a merchant family in Livorno and, throughout his scholarly career, continued to occupy himself with the family business. One of Åkerblad's explanations for why Micali was so ferociously criticized was a social one, and did not regard the substance of Micali's book. From the safe distance of Rome Åkerblad wrote to Countess d'Albany in Florence, explaining the harsh treatment being meted out to Micali:

Micali did wrong to quarrel with the Florentine savant brood, which has caused him more than one problem. It would have been so easy for him to attach himself to this clique, through a few dinners once in a while, and certainly they would not have smeared his book and person like they have done. The learned comprise a guild in Florence more so than in other places, if one wants to be received in it, one has to start by giving gratuities to the masters, to the journeymen and even to the apprentices. This is what Micali forgot to do and that is why he has had so much trouble with this rabble. I foresee that the Zannoni and the Inghirami will wage a war to the death and finally force him to leave Florence forever.³⁹

Micali had not understood that he should, or perhaps he did not care to, make himself popular within the learned circles in Florence. When trying to understand polemics it is often hard to untangle the main issue. As discussed above when describing the exchanges between Åkerblad,

³⁹ JDÅ to Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome, in *Albany*, 132.

Sacy, Young and Champollion, it was often the case that questions not of a strictly scholarly nature were important.

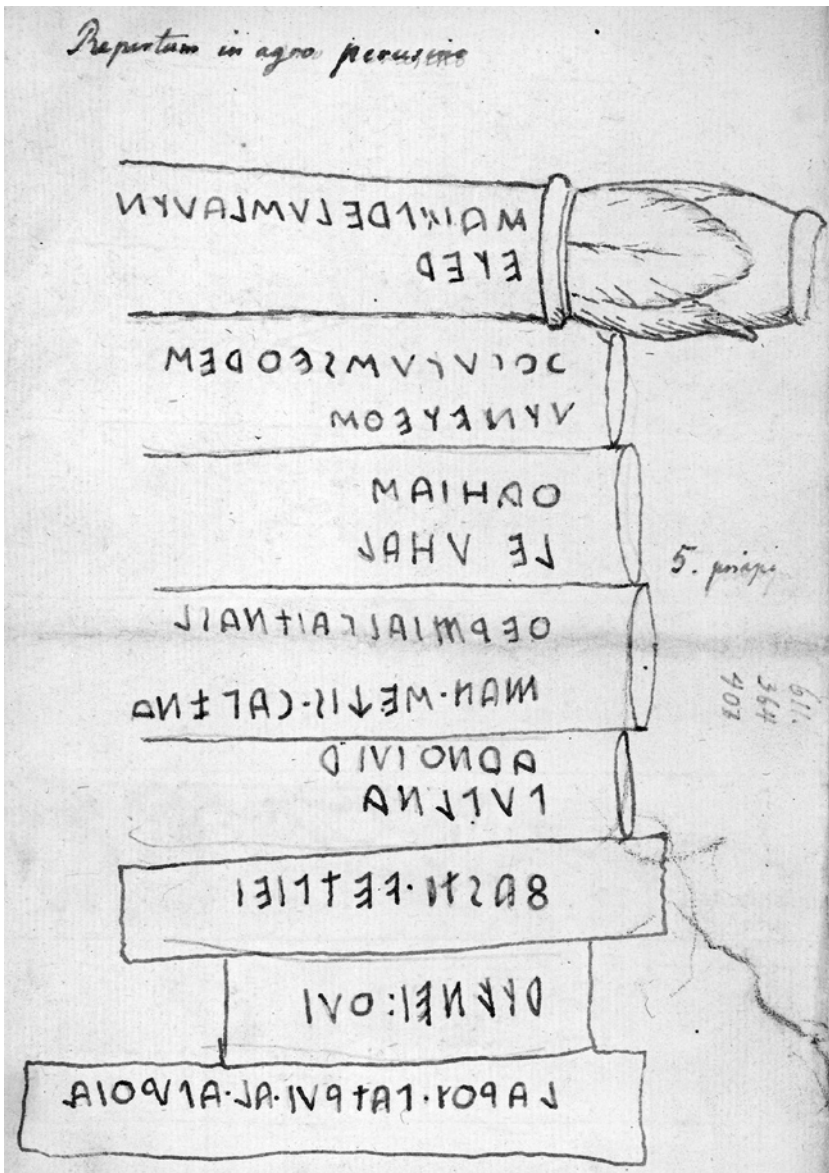
There is no space here to make an in depth account of Micali's arguments in this context. His main proposition was to shift historians' attention from the view that the Roman period was the main constitutive period of the peninsula's history, and instead try to understand to what extent it was possible to write a pre-Roman history. He asserted that he did this without rancour against the Greeks and the Romans, and without any preference for the Etruscans. The last two centuries had seen a large number of works dealing with Etruscan issues. When Bossi, who questioned Åkerblad's finding of the runes on the Venice lions, proposed that Greek culture had emanated from the Pelasgian culture of central Italy, this was another example of attempts to create an Italian history before the Greeks and the Romans. The *Etruscherie* were still in vogue, especially with the antiquarians originating from a supposed ancient Etruria. As mentioned in the discussion on the Venice lions, championing local history was also a political strategy to diminish the importance of Rome and to pre-empt Roman territorial claims (Figure 54).

Åkerblad was dismissive of the *Etruscherie* and applauded when the scholar Luigi Lanzi sorted out the chronological issues concerning 'Etruscan' vases and monuments: "It is incredible to what extent fashion also influences the letters, the modern Tuscans have for more than a century contrived to make out almost every Italian monument as Etruscan. And here comes Lanzi who proves with reason that the majority of these monuments are from the epoch when Greek art already had made progress in Italy."⁴⁰

Etruscanti scholars criticized Micali, who did not attribute paramount importance to the Etruscans. A key figure in this group was Francesco Inghirami, a nobleman from Volterra, the heartland of Etruscan territory.⁴¹ Inghirami would become famous for his publications on Etruscan

⁴⁰ JDÅ to Ciampi, 10 September 1811, KVHAA. See also Åkerblad's correspondence (ten letters 1811–14, mostly on Etruscan matters) with the Perugian antiquary Giovanni Battista Vermiglioli, MS 1508, Carteggio Vermiglioli, Biblioteca Augusta, Perugia.

⁴¹ Enrico Barni, "Francesco Inghirami. Una vita per la cultura," *Rassegna volterrana* 63–64 (1987–88): 56–136. Inghirami mentions Åkerblad's dissertations and their correspondence, see especially the debate on *patere*, the bronze mirrors often found in Etruscan graves. Francesco Inghirami, *Monumenti Etruschi o di Etrusco Nome disegnati, incisi, illustrati e pubblicati dal Cavaliere Francesco Inghirami*, 6 tomes in 9 vols. (Fiesole, 1821–26), t. 2:9, 59f. There is also a letter on the same subject from JDÅ to an unknown, most probably Inghirami, 29 September 1815, Rome, Autografsamlingen, KB.



monuments; he initiated and took part in many excavations. Inghirami printed a savage critique of Micali and his approach to Italian history.⁴²

Åkerblad admitted that there were problematic issues in Micali's book but he understood Micali's aim: to forge a middle way in explaining the history of the peninsula without the excessive claims of both those who maintained that Greece was the only source of culture, and the scholars who championed the Etruscans:

He has sought to find a middle way between the etruscanti of the past two centuries, and the Greek system of Lanzi . . . The explanations of the monuments is the weakest part of Micali's work, and in these parts I am often of Inghirami's opinion; but the latter suffers, according to me, from a larger deficiency, that of taking as certain and indubitable particular explanations which at the most should be considered probable.⁴³

In another letter Åkerblad added that Inghirami's "tone is awful, and here in Rome we are not accustomed to such a despotic manner of explaining monuments without the least hesitation and mocking persons who think the issue is dubious and uncertain." And while Åkerblad remained unconvinced by Micali, he still defended Micali's right to an opinion:

I do not see the great crime that he has committed in exposing his ideas on the origins of the Italian peoples. Micali does not know much Greek, and he is certainly not strong in Latin, but there are many authors . . . many of them illustrious and famous, who do not know those languages better than him.⁴⁴

For all the problems of Micali's work, his intention was to widen historiography and to investigate to what extent preconceptions of Roman and Greek history had influenced the view of pre-Roman Italy. After his initially harsh reception Micali came to be read with greater understanding. His construction of pre-Roman entities, free small states predating Roman occupation, could be used when elaborating a common history of the peninsula, advocating an independent and unified state free from

⁴² [Inghirami, Francesco], "Osservazioni sopra i monumenti antichi uniti all'opera intitolata l'Italia . . .," *Collezione d'opuscoli scientifiche e letterarj ed estratti d'opere interessanti* 13 (1811), 175 pages.

⁴³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 13 September, fragment, no year but most probably 1811, letter no. 15 in *Forteg.*

⁴⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 1 August 1811, KVHAA; JDÅ to Stolberg, 17 July 1811, Rome, in *Albany*, 105.

foreign influence.⁴⁵ Micali's book and ideas, whether he intended it or not, eventually became tools in the process which resulted in the *Risorgimento*, or Italian unification. The debate reveals how differences in opinion originated in geographical considerations. Inghirami's printed critique was in the vein of *Storia Patria*, that is, a defence of the merits of the place of origin, in this case of Tuscany as the successor of Etruria.

Åkerblad, thought the attacks on Micali a fruitless business that would only lead to mockery from other Italians: "In short it displeases me to see how the Tuscans eat each other alive and expose themselves to the laughter and the mockery of the Lombards who already ab antiquo hate the Tuscans."⁴⁶ When Ciampi was later attacked, Åkerblad used the same concept of attachment to local glories to mitigate and explain the assault:

Your antagonists appear ridiculous when they challenge every historical certainty, only to give a few more years to their own monuments; but this is wrongly understood patriotism which unfortunately is general in Italy, where every city, every castle, strives for pride and celebrity by boasting of its past opulence to the neighbours.⁴⁷

Foreign perceptions of such local pride, described later in the nineteenth century by the word *campanilismo*, are frequent in travel literature on Italy. The expression refers to the *campanile*, the bell-tower of the local church. Such local pride was an important factor in shaping historical perceptions, as Åkerblad often justly pointed out.

French Reform and Roman Academies

Åkerblad was already a member of several academies when he arrived in Rome. These were, in descending order of prestige, the *Institut National* in Paris, the Göttingen academy and the Stockholm antiquities academy. His experiences, especially in Paris, had shown him the advantages of belonging to institutions that in some cases could offer support and channels for publishing. Institutional membership was also a source of social prestige. Åkerblad quickly integrated himself into the learned life of Rome and its academies became an important part of this life.

⁴⁵ See Piero Treves' subtle introduction to his selection of Micali's texts, with bibliog. on the reception: *Lo studio dell'antichità classica nell'Ottocento*, ed. Piero Treves (Milano: Ricciardi, 1962), 293–311; and Treves, *L'idea di Roma*.

⁴⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 1 August 1811, KVHAA.

⁴⁷ JDÅ to Ciampi, 19 September 1812, KVHAA.

The history of Rome's academies is well investigated. The modern academy is to a certain extent an Italian invention of the Renaissance and Italy was famous already in the seventeenth century for its large number of academies.⁴⁸

The French began to revive Roman institutions after their final takeover in 1809. Previously there had been an antiquarian academy, founded in 1740, but its activities had petered out in the 1750s.⁴⁹ In October 1810 the *Libera Accademia Romana di Archeologia* was founded on the initiative of Gérando. The word 'free' in its name referred to the fact that it did not fall under religious control, as all former institutions in Rome had done. The first meeting was held in November 1810 in the Palazzo Corsini in Trastevere. However, it was not long before it moved and sessions came to be held in the Campidoglio, the Roman town hall on the top of the Capitol.⁵⁰

The president of the academy, Gérando, had been called back to France in December 1810. He was succeeded by the sculptor Antonio Canova, whom Åkerblad knew from his visit to Venice in 1799. The list of academicians is impressive; practically everyone involved in archaeological work during the 1810s was a member. Although the statutes prohibited any involvement in the sale and export of antiquities by its members, this was a rule that was not slavishly observed.⁵¹

Gérando was instrumental in reviving Rome's academies and supporting the creation of new institutions to study and safeguard the city's historical and artistic heritage. This was part of his programme for education and research; in 1807 he suggested to Napoleon a reform of French studies of antiquity and literature. The French Roman policies concerning heritage and education cannot be ascribed exclusively to Gérando's intervention,

⁴⁸ Amedeo Quondam, "L'Accademia," in *Letteratura italiana*, vol. 1. *Il letterato e le istituzioni*, ed. Alberto Asor Rosa (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), 823–98.

⁴⁹ Michele Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna: Hoepli, 1929–30), 5:36.

⁵⁰ Carlo Pietrangeli, "La Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia," in *Speculum mundi: Roma centro internazionale di ricerche umanistiche*, ed. Paolo Vian (Rome: Unione Internazionale degli Istituti di Archeologia, Storia e Storia dell'Arte in Roma, 1992); Filippo Magi, "Per la storia della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia," *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, 1940, 113–30.

⁵¹ List of members in the first printed proceedings of the academy: *Dissertazioni della Pontificia accademia romana di archeologia*, t. 1, part 1 (1821), 13ff. The statutes are published in Carlo Pietrangeli, ed., *La Pontificia Accademia romana di archeologia: note storiche* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1983), 25ff., § 13, § 24.

but he was without doubt influential in their development.⁵² Similarly, classical studies and archaeological work during these years cannot be decoupled from the French occupation and the wars. There had already been some systematic archaeological and restoration activities during the previous decade in Rome, but after the arrival of the French these activities became greatly increased.⁵³

With the stroke of a pen Rome had become the French Empire's second most important city, at least nominally. Napoleon had adopted several symbols from the Roman Empire and an explicit goal of his was to model French expansion on Roman precedents. It was thus imperative for France to be proactive in caring for Roman remains and one of the *Consulta's* first decrees of 21 June 1810 instituted a commission "charged with the inspection and the special conservation of ancient and modern monuments in the city of Rome and in the Roman states."⁵⁴

When Gérando left, Åkerblad lost his direct channel to Roman power. He informed Ciampi that mail had to be addressed to himself again because he did not have the same "familiarity" with the new governor, Camille de Tournon.⁵⁵ Tournon was appointed *préfet du département du Tibre* and was to remain as prefect during the French occupation. Tournon was an able administrator and left substantial correspondence and diaries, which have been mined by many historians working on the period. He is frequently cited and discussed by, for instance, Broers. The reforms that Tournon initiated were far-reaching, but the comparatively short French rule and the increasing financial and political difficulties during the last years of the Napoleonic wars halted attempts to drastically change Roman society.⁵⁶

⁵² Susanne Adina Mayer, "Le mostre in Campidoglio durante il periodo Napoleonico," in *Fictions of Isolation: Artistic and Intellectual Exchange in Rome during the first Half of the Nineteenth Century...*, ed. Lorenz Enderlein and Nino Zchomelidse (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2006); Francesca Sofia, "Recueillir et mettre en ordre : aspetti della politica amministrativa di J.-M. de Gérando a Roma," *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 2, no. 1 (1994): 105–124.

⁵³ Marita Jonsson, *La cura dei monumenti. Restauro e scavo di monumenti antichi a Roma 1800–1830* (Gothenburg: Åström, 1986); Ronald T. Ridley, *The Eagle and the Spade: Archaeology in Rome during the Napoleonic Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992).

⁵⁴ Consulta decree no. 37, cited in Ridley, *Eagle and Spade*, 48.

⁵⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 4 May 1811, KVHAA.

⁵⁶ Carla Nardi *Napoleone e Roma. La politica della Consulta romana* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1989); Nardi, *Napoleone e Roma. Dalla Consulta romana al ritorno di Pio VII (1811–1814)* (Rome: Gangemi, 2005).

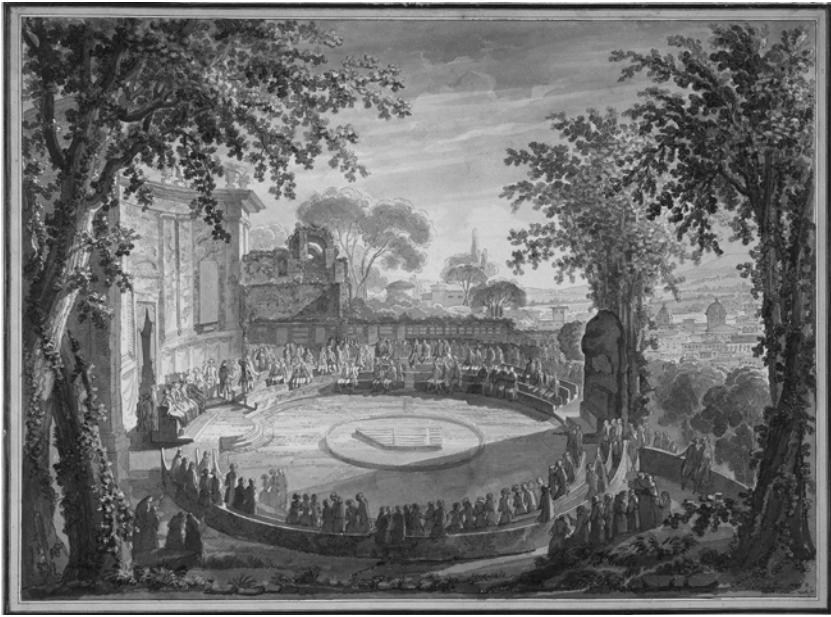


Figure 55. The Arcadia met in the open in their Bosco Parrasio on the slope of the Gianicolo hill towards the city. This 1788 meeting was drawn by the Swedish artist Jonas Åkerström (1759–1795). Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Another previously influential academy that the French attempted to revive was the Accademia dell’Arcadia, which had important Swedish connections (Figure 55). The Swedish queen Christina (1626–1689) had abdicated in 1654 and gone to live in Rome. Christina became an influential cultural patron in Rome and instituted the Accademia Reale, which was the immediate predecessor of Arcadia.⁵⁷

Åkerblad was elected a member of the Arcadia sometime in 1809. All academicians were given shepherd names and Åkerblad’s name was *Anticarmo Cifisio*. Arcadia was also special in that it had active female

⁵⁷ Literature on Christina is abundant. For recent contributions on Christina’s role in Roman cultural life and Italian literature see: Stefano Fogelberg Rota, *Poesins drottning: Christina av Sverige och de italienska akademierna* (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2008); Susanna Åkerman, *Queen Christina of Sweden and her circle: The transformation of a Seventeenth-Century philosophical libertine* (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

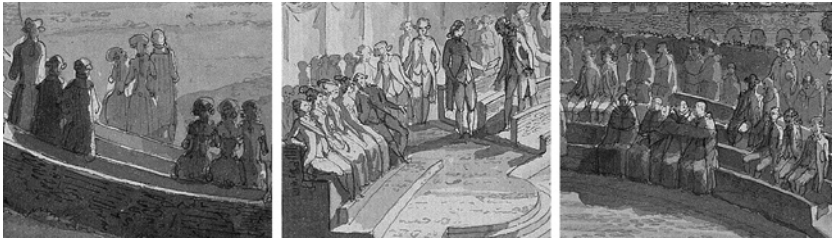


Figure 56. Three details of Åkerström's drawing above show the mix of participants. Women among the audience and invitees, clergy in their frocks etc. Compared to the more specialized meetings of, for instance, the archaeological academy it appears to be rather a social occasion.

members, shepherdesses, significantly named using the diminutive form *pastorelle*.⁵⁸

Arcadia had been a prominent institution ever since its foundation but at the end of the eighteenth century the academy began to lose its influence. It was nevertheless important for scholars in Rome to belong to Arcadia. The academy assembled with relative frequency and it was an important central social meeting place with the particularly Roman blend of churchmen, nobles and laymen (Figure 56).

In earlier works on Arcadia it has been supposed that the academy almost ceased its activities during the French occupation. This perception may have arisen through the scarcity of archival material from 1809 until restoration of papal power in 1814. Maria Iolanda Palazzolo has convincingly shown how Arcadia continued its activities during the French period.⁵⁹ As with the archaeological academy, French governors promoted Arcadia's activities and wanted to restore it to its former place as the pre-eminent Roman literary academy. Åkerblad's involvement with Arcadia during these years also shows that there were frequent activities.

Like many other academies, Arcadia arranged literary competitions. Paul-Louis Courier was still embroiled in the affair over the Longus fragment that he had found and destroyed in Florence. He badly needed to repair his reputation in Italy and decided to offer a prize for the best translation of the new *Daphnis and Chloe* passage into Italian. He arranged for

⁵⁸ John Bernström and Bengt Rapp, "Nordiska ledamöter av Accademia degli Arcadi i Rom 1743–1824," *Historiskt arkiv* 15 (1969); Carl Bildt, *Svenska Minnen och Märken i Rom* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1900), 157; Susan M Dixon, "Women in Arcadia," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (1999): 371–75.

⁵⁹ Palazzolo, *Editoria e istituzioni a Roma*, 175–89.

Arcadia to announce a competition, the winner's translation would be printed.⁶⁰

Åkerblad sent a copy of Courier's edition of Longus to Ciampi in Pisa and informed him about the competition. Ciampi decided to enter and sent his translation to Åkerblad in Rome, who passed it on to Arcadia's president, the *Custode generale*. The contributions were anonymous. Both Åkerblad and Courier became increasingly suspicious about how Arcadia was proceeding with the entries. When Courier left Rome he asked Åkerblad "to keep an eye on the conduct of Arcadia in this business so that things will be done with a certain impartiality."⁶¹ The competition dragged on and Åkerblad began to lose patience. In July it was announced that the winner would not be chosen until October. Åkerblad had had enough of Arcadia and blurted out:

Now I am told that the doddering custodian of this sleeping and decrepit academy wants to postpone until the month of October the great business of judgment . . . The fact is that neither the custodian nor his stupid [12] wise men understand Greek at all and the only Arcadian that pretends to know something, a certain Pasqualoni, has shown himself to be indecently in favour of Count Verri, whose translation of the famous fragment he wants to coronate without even examining the others, something which even Godard [the academy's custodian] thought was too ridiculous.⁶²

Åkerblad and Courier's suspicions were well-founded and the gossip was proven true. In October Åkerblad learned who the winner was. He tried to soften the blow to Ciampi and concluded that this was further proof of the "ridiculousness of academic verdicts in all literary matters where the only impartial verdict is that of the audience."⁶³

Both Åkerblad and Courier were upset but hardly surprised. Åkerblad explained the perversities of the system by again referring to excessive local pride: "The reason is the partiality in favour of one's own city, more common in Italy than in other places; I am not criticizing this partiality but it is only to be hoped that it was not so often unjust in literary matters."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ On Courier's role see: Noëlle de la Blanchardière, "Un Concours littéraire au début de 19^e siècle. P.-L. Courier et l'Arcadie (d'après des documents inédits)," *Cahiers Paul-Louis Courier*, 1973, 5–16; JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 August 1810, KVHAA.

⁶¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 16 April, Forteg.

⁶² JDÅ to Ciampi, 5 May 1811, KVHAA.

⁶³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 October 1811, KVHAA. Ciampi did not take the affair lightly; it is described with acrimony in his unpublished MS autobiography *Ecce Homo*, E 361, Forteg; JDÅ to Ciampi, 31 October [1811], Forteg.

⁶⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 29 November 1811, Forteg.

According to Åkerblad, other Italian literary prizes were awarded on the same grounds: "Likewise [Accademia della] Crusca awards three Tuscans, the Istituto Italico only Lombards, and so Count Verri for being Roman has been awarded by the Roman Arcadia."⁶⁵ Ciampi in Pisa had no local academy of sufficient prestige to support him. Åkerblad proposed a few years later how the working of the academies could be improved:

It is easy to prove the total uselessness of Crusca and Arcadia, but while these academies do no great good, neither do they do great harm. But what would you say about the academy of inscriptions in Paris, the royal society of London, that in Göttingen, Petersburg &c &c? They are certainly good and useful and it would be enough to found scholarly societies modelled on them to make them equally useful and good.⁶⁶

Åkerblad was a member of two of the academies he cites as examples to follow, the Parisian and the one in Göttingen. He knew how British societies worked and during the 1810s he had come to know both Russians and Poles in Rome and had a fair idea about the situation in Russia. But this might not have been the point. The question was rather whether an institutional model could be copied from abroad? The academies were expressions of existing social hierarchies and networks, and it is hard to imagine that by copying the function of foreign academies and introducing more stringent statutes, the Italian academies would have appeared less futile to Åkerblad and other foreign observers.

Åkerblad and his colleagues also frequently complained about the lack of learned journals in Italy.⁶⁷ Journals appeared but quickly vanished again, as in the case of *Giornale Enciclopedico*. Åkerblad and Ciampi often discussed journals and as usual their comments were frank:

Concerning literary journals we will never have a tolerable one. Solid criticism is not found in any of those I know, either everything is praised like by the good Avellino in Naples, or the most respectable characters are insulted as by the one in Milan. One never encounters good taste united with deep knowledge guided by fairness and judgment.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Ibid. The Milanese count Alessandro Verri (1741–1816), an acquaintance of Åkerblad's, was a well-known writer and brother of the philosopher, historian and economist Pietro Verri (1728–1797).

⁶⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 11 September 1816, KVHAA.

⁶⁷ Rome had far less periodicals than Naples and Florence. Boutier, *Naples, Rome, Florence*, 709–16.

⁶⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 11 September 1816, KVHAA. Francesco Maria Avellino 1788–1850.

Åkerblad's solution to the lack of decent Italian journals was again to copy foreign models. When the borders opened after the wars ended he could access British journals and took the *Quarterly Review* as a model for an Italian journal that would review all relevant books published in Italy and some foreign titles, without inserting "dissertations, dreams, vapid dialogues or abuses of every sort" while adding: "But this is a pious wish that will not be soon realised."⁶⁹

Åkerblad was well aware that his programme to reform the journals would be difficult to realize. The journals were, like the academies, in economic difficulty and dependent on patronage. The journal in Milan—he was referring to *Biblioteca Italiana*—had political support from the highest level of government. Without a minimum degree of independence it was impossible to achieve and maintain decent standards.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

SALONS AND BELLE AMICHE

During Åkerblad's time in Italy he had several female scholar friends. But it is only in Rome that we also get a picture of his private involvement with women. Åkerblad quickly adapted to Roman social life and he thoroughly enjoyed it:

But you as an old resident of the eternal city know well that the month of October is solely destined for amusements, and between trips to the countryside, lunches, dinners, the lady friend and excesses no one thinks about serious occupations. I have spent my time like that as well and I say with contrition, *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*.¹

The countryside sojourns of October were a tradition he would continue to enjoy. A couple of years later he wished Ciampi a pleasant holiday: "But I remember that tomorrow we enter the blessed month of October, when it is a misdeed to do anything else but enjoy oneself. Thus I will do the same. I wish you a pleasant *villeggiatura* and beautiful lady friend! Farewell."² The correspondence with Ciampi gives us glimpses of both Åkerblad's and Ciampi's affairs. When Åkerblad wished him "bella amica," a beautiful lady friend for the holidays, he wished Ciampi the good company of a mistress. Åkerblad and many of his Roman male friends were not married. Another of Åkerblad's close friends, Girolamo Amati (1768–1834), was an *abate* and that did not stop him, like the *abate* Ciampi, from conducting affairs.

Åkerblad's letters to Ciampi are the only source where he himself mentions his amorous life. In an earlier letter, written from Pisa to a Swede posted in Livorno, Åkerblad gave disillusioned advice on his friend's tormented affair with a certain Alesina. He implored his friend to start thinking about how the beautiful Alesina necessarily gave her favours to at least three or four different men every day. This would be painful in

¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 18 November 1809, KVHAA.

² JDÅ to Ciampi, 30 September 1813, KVHAA.

the beginning but in the long run the only way to fight the “ugly beast” of jealousy.³

It was well-known that Italy was a place where men went to drink and whore and Swedish travellers were no different. A writer who visited Rome in 1818 remarked on other Swedish visitors: “Like the Swedish Nobility and Military in general, they are presumably only judges of uniforms, balls, horses, w[hore]s and dogs.”⁴ Åkerblad did not have the same funds as rich travellers, but he could certainly have afforded such activities in the cheaper range.

Ciampi co-habited with a woman in Pisa despite being an *abate*. Obviously, he was unable to marry her. In many ways the same was true for Åkerblad, who could never have married within the social circles he frequented. It should also be underlined that even if Åkerblad had wanted or could have afforded to marry, it would not have excluded him from keeping a mistress. There was often little difference between married men and bachelors in this respect. Åkerblad was famed as a ladies’ man, but it is hard to know who and what to believe. Nonetheless, we do know that he resorted to the company of *belle amiche*.

There were also other types of rumours on Åkerblad’s interest in women. His acquaintance Gérando had not come alone to Rome; his wife accompanied him. Marie-Anne de Gérando (1774–1824) was, like her husband Joseph-Marie, from a provincial noble family. She was an accomplished letter-writer and like her husband, well-educated with wide cultural interests.⁵ According to Caroline von Humboldt Åkerblad was infatuated with her: “Åkerblad is completely in love with Madame Degérando and they look like brother and sister.”⁶ The painter Gottlieb Schick, who had painted many members of the Humboldt family, made a portrait of Gérando in 1809. Humboldt was not happy about it and according to her it was an unrewarding task to paint her, she looked like the “big and fat Åkerblad.”⁷

³ JDÅ to Pietro [Pehr] Wahlström (1776–1854), Pisa, undated but most probably 1806, Autografsamlingen, Zorn–, Fredrik Sparres samling, Ericssbergssarkivet, SNA.

⁴ Per Daniel Atterbom to Erik Gustaf Geijer, 14 March 1818, Rome, p. 51, Ep. A 15, KB. On sex, gambling and drinking of the grand tourists see Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2003), 118–34.

⁵ *Lettres de la baronne de Gérando née de Rathsamhausen; suivies de Fragments d'un journal écrit par elle de 1800 à 1804* (Paris, 1880).

⁶ Caroline to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 16 August 1809, Rome, in Humboldt, *Briefen*, 3:220.

⁷ Caroline von Humboldt to Welcker, Rome 29 December 1809, in Humboldt and Welcker, *Briefwechsel*, 73 and note p. 290. The location of the portrait is unknown.

Mario Pieri (1776–1852) from the Ionian island of Corfu described Åkerblad's physical appearance and behaviour in his diary:

He is a big fat man with a completely Northern face, and seems to be everything else but a man of letters. He talks with pleasure, not only about letters, but also about women; and from what I have heard he passes his time between women and letters, a life, to say the truth, that would be very dear to me as well. I did not have the best information on his moral character, and all those that have spoken to me about this agreed, and from some of his hints, thrown out here and there, I believe it was confirmed.⁸

Pieri's printed autobiography mostly follows the diary, but this passage was changed when it was published in 1850, almost forty years after meeting Åkerblad. At this later time he was no longer jealous of Åkerblad's life divided between women and learning, and the phrase was erased. His moral judgement had become more severe; there is no trace in the diary of the printed phrase: "Moreover, to me he seemed very proud and full of himself."⁹

On the other hand Pieri had no specific reason to smear Åkerblad's name posthumously, unlike consul Pentini. The letter Pentini sent to Stockholm accompanying the estate inventory made after Åkerblad's death has already been quoted above in the introduction, but I repeat it here:

It is however quite singular that among the papers of the said deceased [Åkerblad], except for a small part, everything else only regards correspondence with women, my opinion is that it should all be set aflame to avoid compromising *peace within various families*, and even *the honour of the persons* that have been imprudent enough to write, and to conserve documents of what should have been consecrated to the most rigorous silence.¹⁰

Pentini's description is without doubt exaggerated. Åkerblad had certainly kept some of his voluminous scholarly correspondence, but that was destroyed as well. But in admitting that there was also correspondence with women, whose honour did Pentini really want to protect? Did Åkerblad actually have affairs in higher circles or was he, like many of his fellow foreigners, rather restricted to 'women of the people'? During his

⁸ Mario Pieri, diary entry 22 September 1811, in *Memorie I*, ed. Roberta Masini (Rome: Bulzoni, 2003), 375.

⁹ Mario Pieri, *Della vita di Mario Pieri, Corcirese, Scritta da lui medesimo*, 6 books in 3 vols. (Florence, 1850), 1:240.

¹⁰ Pentini to Chancery Board, 15 May 1819, Rome, no. 973, vol. 66, *Skrivelser från konsuler*, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

first years in Rome Åkerblad was accused by a Swedish adversary of “being maintained by an old woman.”¹¹

After Courier had left Rome, Åkerblad wrote to him about how his female friends were complaining: “Neither the princess, nor Madame Millingen, or even your mistress receive any news.”¹² Courier was known for his gallantry but the three classes are typical; the Roman princess, the wife of a foreign antiquities dealer and his mistress of the people, Rosa Mongiu who was referred to as *la belle blanchisseuse*, the beautiful laundress.

A few years later Åkerblad asked favours of Ciampi. He wanted to know what had become of a friend of his:

Before finishing this long letter I would like to give you a small errand. Would you please procure news on what sort of a man a certain *Ovel* is, a French emigrated priest that has come to live in Florence where he owns property. An old friend of mine, she is also French, has gone to live in his house and talks about this priest like the flower of every virtue, while other reports make him out as a monster, a whoremonger, a usurer, and I also believe a sodomite. Inform yourself thus a little about this man, and also about what kind of life the Frenchwoman lives, probably his concubine now.¹³

Åkerblad gave Ciampi instructions where he could find the information but also told him to make sure that no one knew who was asking. Ciampi did provide a few answers about Ovel, but he did not learn anything about what Åkerblad was really interested in: his French female friend. Three weeks later Åkerblad wrote again:

I would therefore like to know if the Frenchwoman, whose name is Sofia Denouette is still in the house of this priest in Florence or if she is with him in Lucca? Months ago she wrote me and wanted . . . to return to live with me in Rome, but I, who had never been happy with the conduct of that woman for the two years that I looked after her, answered her not to come.¹⁴

Sofia Denouette had left for Florence in late 1816. Åkerblad repeated that he did not care about her. He once again warned Ciampi not to reveal who was asking for the news. But when Ciampi failed to obtain the required information for the second time, Åkerblad wrote back with even more precise information about his “donetta”:

¹¹ Lagerswård to Engeström, Apostille Particulière du 3. d'avril 1810, no. 257, 1810:1, A–L, Ep E 10:8, KB.

¹² JDÅ to Courier, 22 December 1812, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:355. See also JDÅ to Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome, in *Albany*, 131.

¹³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 7 June 1817, KVHAA.

¹⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 June 1817, KVHAA.

Because that woman, who finds herself there for seven months and often wrote to me has not given me any sign of life for the last six weeks, she may have left or typhus may have sent her to Hades, this is the reason that I have bothered you, dear friend, to procure me the simple piece of news as to whether *madama Sofia* is in Florence or not.¹⁵

As in his previous letter he underlined that it was of no great importance because he had no intention of taking her back. This was the third time that he offered the same excuse and considering his insistence on getting news about her, it must have sounded hollow to Ciampi, who eventually managed to provide the requested information. Sofia Denouette had not been sent to Hades but lived on in Florence. Åkerblad thanked Ciampi for his efforts and explained some of the reasons why he did not want her to come back and live with him in Rome:

I thank you dear friend for the news you kindly procured me to satisfy my curiosity about the life and miracles of this Santa Sofia. . . . I still harbour some heretic thoughts and I am more than content to have freed myself from the saint, as in addition to relief for my purse, I have like this also avoided certain dangers that the saint's universal charity would have exposed me to.¹⁶

Given that he had so insistently requested information about his previous mistress, it is hard to believe that he was completely uninterested. Åkerblad had advised his Swedish friend in Livorno not to let jealousy take hold of him, but it seems he could not avoid the ugly beast himself.

The "universal charity" of the saint was a veiled reference to the risk of contracting a sexually transmitted disease. In the correspondence with Ciampi there are frequent allusions to friends who suffered from venereal diseases. Åkerblad's friend, Amati, was such a case: "poor Amati finds himself at the Santo Spirito hospital for more than a month now seeking to cure himself from a certain bad ailment that he contracted because he loved the fair sex too much."¹⁷ Amati, perennially poor, could not afford to pay a doctor to cure him at home. Going to the hospital was a solution of last resort.

Åkerblad rarely complained about his wellbeing and the testimonies we have underline his ruddy good health. The painter Johann Christian Reinhart, whom Åkerblad considered to be one of the best painters in

¹⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 July 1817, KVHAA.

¹⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 7 August 1817, Forteg.

¹⁷ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 August 1814, KVHAA.

Rome, called him a Faun in *rosso antico*.¹⁸ To call Åkerblad a Faun has obvious sexual associations: in Roman mythology fauns were related to Satyrs, and even if they were originally different mythological creatures, they were both associated with orgiastic rites and bacchanals.

Defending Madame de Staël

There is often a risk of downplaying female participation in scholarly and intellectual life. Salons hosted by women were an important forum for social life in Rome outside the academies. Åkerblad frequented many of them. The role of the salons in Rome was certainly not as important as it was in for instance Paris; Rome was, after all, a comparatively small town and many visitors were dissatisfied with its social life. Nevertheless, Åkerblad was busy with the almost ritual afternoon visits to the houses of both foreign and Italian noble hostesses, as well as participating in the evening salons: "Add to that a little bit of Polish and Russian princesses, or, what is better, Italian, and the day passes before one has time to yawn too much, except maybe at night at the *conversazioni*; but where does not one get bored with the *conversazioni*?"¹⁹ *Conversazioni* is the Italian term for the salon. Many noble households arranged after-dinner gatherings, and in Rome these often did not start until ten o'clock in the evening.

Åkerblad attended the salon of painter and writer Marianna Candidi Dionigi who had terminated her friendship with Courier after the ink-blot affair.²⁰ Åkerblad also frequented the salons of international nobility and diplomats in Rome, among others the Humboldt house presided over by Caroline. He also won the favour of noble female visitors who arrived in the city after the wars ended in 1815. He was frequently in contact with Friedrich Münter's sister, the writer Friederike Brun (1765–1835). Brun lived in Rome for many years and wrote several books about her Italian experiences. Åkerblad discussed politics with her and they shared worries

¹⁸ Reinhard Kekulé, *Das Leben Friedrich Gottlieb Welckers: nach seinen eignen Aufzeichnungen und Briefe* (Leipzig, 1880), 83.

¹⁹ JDÅ to Stolberg, Rome 9 June 1812, in *Albany*, 131. Mirabelle Madignier, "Conversazioni, salons et sociabilités intellectuelles informelles à Rome et à Florence au XVIII^e siècle," in Boutier, *Naples, Rome, Florence*; Donato, *Accademie romane*, 117ff.

²⁰ Pieri, *Memorie*, 381, 400.

over the situation of Sweden and Denmark. He also met with future writer Laure Junot, Duchess d'Abrantès, during her time in Rome.²¹

That it was a different, and difficult, experience to be a woman in literary battles was also clear to Åkerblad. He was dismayed by the treatment of Madame de Staël during a drawn-out polemic on Italian literature and intellectual life. De Staël had forged an exceptional career as a writer and intellectual. Because of her opposition to Napoleon, she had been forced to leave France. Åkerblad had met her in Paris during the 1780s. She lived a peripatetic life, often residing in neutral Switzerland in between her trips all over Europe. She was famous for her books as well as for her private life, which many considered scandalous.

De Staël was visiting Italy in 1815 and was invited to write an article in the first issue of a new Milanese journal, the *Biblioteca italiana*.²² She chose to elaborate on the lack of interest in foreign literature in Italy. Her article was not a masterpiece of tact and her ideas on Italian cultural life were not wholly up to date. She repeated prejudices about the lack of interest in foreign matters that many travellers had remarked upon, both before and after her. But she also made relevant observations. The fierce debate it gave birth to proves that she hit a nerve. Her article released a flood of publications and Åkerblad was especially upset by an anonymous invective published in a Florence paper:

These [men of letters] have not gained any honour by their diatribe against the famous woman . . . The bestial scolding regarding the age of the illustrious woman is befitting of the idiotic scoundrel that has had the courage to write such stupidities . . . you or some other gentleman, for the honour of Tuscany, should attack him as he merits. If you know who is the author of this scandalous article . . . I would be curious to know it.²³

The article Åkerblad referred to was ferocious, mixing nationalist pride with a smearing of de Staël's character. She was slandered for her amorous liaisons, for being of rich birth, for her age, in short, for everything a woman should not be and do. Åkerblad knew that a male intellectual

²¹ JDÅ to Friederike Brun, February 1810, Rome, fol. 148, NKS 1992, KBK; JDÅ to Löwenhielm, 15 August 1817, Rome, Ep L 24, KB.

²² Staël, "Sulla maniera e la utilità delle Traduzioni," *Biblioteca italiana ossia Giornale di letteratura, scienze ed arti compilato da una società di letterati* 1 (1816): 9–18. The articles in the polemic in Egidio Bellorini, ed., *Discussioni e polemiche sul romanticismo (1816–1826)*, 2 vols. (Bari: Laterza, 1943), the Florentine attack: 1:11–15; Grazia Avitabile: *The Controversy on Romanticism in Italy: First Phase, 1816–1823* (New York: Vanni, 1959).

²³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 13 April 1816, KVHAA.

would never have been publicly criticized in the same way and this made him furious.

The attacks also very much resembles the criticism to which he himself had been subjected when he had accused Italian scholars of not being interested in anything else but Latin and Greek. He knew the effects of writing such things and de Staël's article, whatever its merits, was further proof that the sensitivity of many Italians could not bear foreign critique. He had learnt his lesson from the Venice lion debate and added ironically—a quip partially cited above: "But quiet! For the love of God, do not tell a living soul that I find Italian journals detestable, if you do the very learned Bossi of Milan or the elegant critic of Madame Staël will wage a deathly war against me."²⁴ Åkerblad's interpretation of the whole business was that de Staël was so scandalously attacked purely because she was a woman.

It is difficult to combine the image of Åkerblad's amorous life—which seems to have been fairly typical for the times and for his social class—with his interaction with women artists and intellectuals. There seem to have been watertight bulkheads between the areas. But this is, of course, due to our contemporary perspective.

²⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWENTY

CURSES AND CABALS

In 1811 Åkerblad had written his contribution to the Roman archaeological academy about two small bronze tablets brought back from Greece by his friend Edward Dodwell. For some reason Dodwell had not shown him all his Greek objects. Åkerblad had learnt from Ennio Quirino Visconti that there were other types of inscribed metal tablets found in Greek graves.¹ He mentioned this to Dodwell, who informed Åkerblad that he had a similar object in his possession, a small lead sheet with letters on it that were difficult to read (Figure 57). It appears that Dodwell had not communicated his find because he had not realized that there was a text on the little folded lead sheet.

At that time these tablets had no collective name; we now call them 'curse tablets.' They often go under their Latin and Greek names, *defixio* and *katadesmoi*, meaning roughly 'binding,' which refers to how the curses bound the object of the invocations to fulfil or submit to the curse. The tablets found in the Athens area were usually of lead, a by-product from silver mining. The softness of the metal made them easy to inscribe, and lead was considered a special material because of its high weight and low melting point. Other materials were also used for the same purpose, but writings on wood or leather have perished.

The lead tablets are often found either folded or rolled up and often pierced by a needle or a nail. Small pierced dolls are also a common variety of this type of magic, often called 'poppets' or 'figurines' in literature on magic. These small tablets and dolls were intended to invoke supernatural powers, most often against a specific person or for a specific cause.

The invocations deal with all areas of life and society: wishes for success in sex and love, pleas for justice and revenge, for gaining health or against malady, success in sports and the theatre, vying for victory in business, politics and court cases and much more. The curses have recently been the subject of a variety of investigations. Much attention has been

¹ Visconti who was living in Paris since the fall of the Roman Republic, read 3 July 1812 a brief explanation of a curse tablet at the now renamed *Institut Impériale, Mercure de France*, July 1812, 74–75.

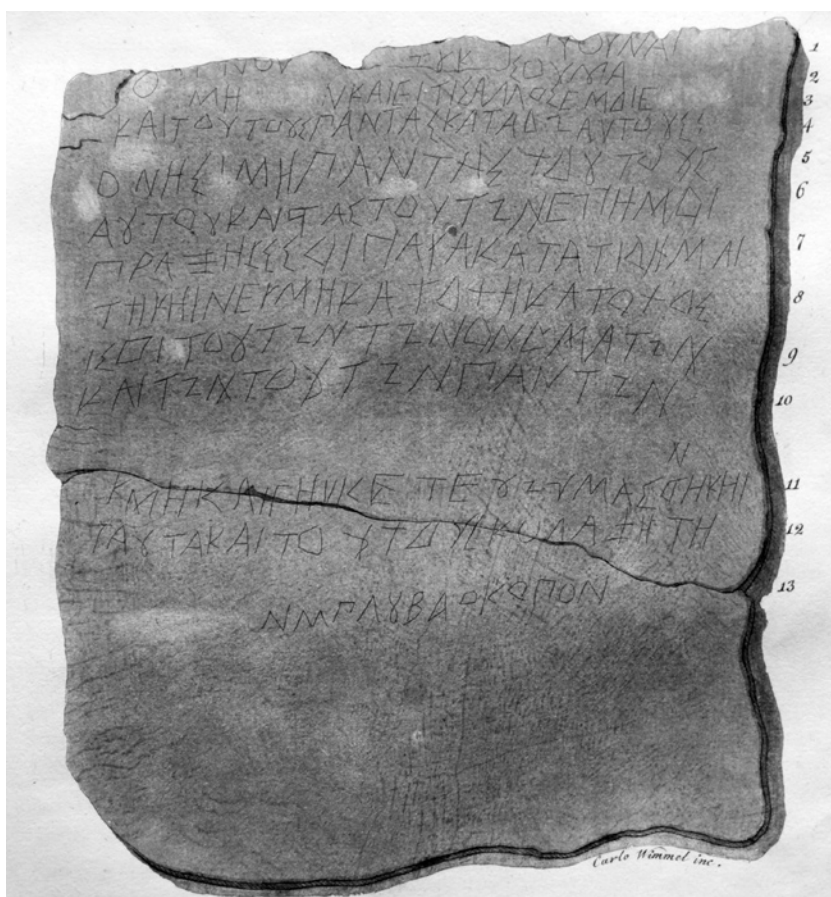


Figure 57. The small lead curse tablet Åkerblad found in Dodwell's collection, engraved by Carl Ludwig Wimmel. Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*. Photo author.

paid to them as sources for gender relations and the status of women in Greek society. The curse tablets are also often used as a source for social history.²

About 1600 tablets are known to exist today. They have been found all around the Mediterranean, from Mesopotamia to Spain and in many

² For discussion of bibliography and uses see Daniel Ogden, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman worlds," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, Vol. 7, *Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clarke (Philadelphia, PA: Pennsylvania UP, 1999); Christopher A. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999).

locations of the Roman world. An important collection was found in Bath in England, where the tablets had been thrown into the water of a holy spring. The tablets range in date covering a period of more than a thousand years, starting from the fifth century BCE, and are written in many local languages. The custom of using curse tablets existed in parallel with the diffusion of the Christian faith for several centuries.

Åkerblad's 1813 publication, *Iscrizione greca sopra una lamina di piombo trovata in un sepolcro nelle vicinanze di Atene* [A Greek inscription on a lead sheet found in a grave near Athens] was the first treatise ever dedicated to a curse tablet, which makes it especially interesting.³ Many antiquarians were aware of the existence of these tablets and the type of texts they contained, but Åkerblad was the first to find the phenomenon interesting enough to treat it in a systematic way and in a separate publication. It was only in the late-nineteenth century that they began to be collected and published.

Åkerblad's interest in graphic riddles has been mentioned several times; this time he described in detail how he first cleaned the lead tablet from chemical residue to make it at least hypothetically intelligible, stating that: "It would be very hard to make someone who has not seen these tablets understand the difficulties I meet in deciphering them."⁴ One of the pioneer compilers of a curse tablet corpus cited Åkerblad when he underlined the effort involved in trying to figure out what was written on the tablets.⁵ This is still a considerable problem. Furthermore, many of the thin lead tablets have disintegrated. The use of corrosive chemicals to clean the tablets has done nothing to help their conservation; Åkerblad himself tried various types on the specimen he described.

Modern scholars have attempted to explain why the tablets remained understudied for so long. One of the reasons was the extreme difficulty of reading the tablets, which was surely one of the aspects that drew Åkerblad's interest to them. John G. Gager's standard work introducing the tablets offers various explanations for why these texts were so little studied and understood.⁶ One of the usual responses to this question

³ D. R. Jordan, "Curses from the waters of Sulis," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 3 (1990): 437–41. Åkerblad's treatise was enthusiastically reviewed by Courier in *Magasin encyclopédique*, 1813, t. 5, 445–48.

⁴ Åkerblad, *Lamina di piombo*, 7.

⁵ Auguste Audollent, *Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis orientis quam in totius...* (Paris: Fontemoing, 1904), xxiii ff.

⁶ John G. Gager, ed., *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992).

is that it was difficult to acknowledge to what extent the Greeks were mired in a tradition of superstition and thus not as 'rational' and lofty as their nineteenth-century image often implied. When reading Åkerblad's treatise it is difficult to find support for the idea that Greek culture was more 'rational' than the culture of any other historical period. When E. R. Dodds explained the motivations for writing his influential *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), he referred to an anecdote about a meeting with a student who was observing the Parthenon marbles in the British Museum.⁷ The student thought that the Greeks were rational to the point that they did not invoke any emotions in the observer, and Dodds used this as the starting point to re-introduce the many elements in Greek culture that according to him had been overlooked in recent studies. This is not the place to track how perceptions of the Greeks changed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but it is obvious that Åkerblad did not share the idealized view of some of his predecessors, nor that of many later scholars. Magic and curses were often mentioned in Greek literature and Åkerblad knew the classical mockery of superstition. He referred in his treatise to the second-century writer Lucian of Samosata, who derided superstition in clear terms: "You have first to show . . . a fever or a tumour to take fright and bolt at the sound of holy names and foreign incantations; till then, your instances are no better than old wives' tales."⁸ In short, there was no lack of evidence for Greek magic.

There is a tendency in modern scholarship to maintain that certain sources, in this case the curse tablets, have been overlooked for almost ideological reasons. The role and pervasiveness of superstition as a part of religion and rituals in antiquity has according to such a view been downplayed so as not to disturb the view of Greeks as rational. If we accept such a view without question it makes it difficult to follow the history of the discipline, or to take into account other themes in previous scholarship that do not adhere to our retrospective view. Greek religion and mythology had always been studied, but the subgenre of superstition and magical practices was often not included in the image of classical history that emerged.

Åkerblad and some of his contemporaries were pioneers when they worked on the tablets. They recognised that the curses were little studied,

⁷ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: California UP, 1951).

⁸ Lucian of Samosata (c. 120–post 180 CE), *Philopseudes* or *Lover of Lies*.

but there was no need to maintain the idea that the subject had been put aside for ideological or idealizing reasons; they did not have to position themselves in relation to earlier scholarship. Their interest in curse tablets can in many ways be compared to the study of Greek papyri, mostly found in Egypt. The inclusion of so-called magic papyri in the publication of the papyri corpus was comparatively late; literature and 'high' texts were first investigated. Papyrologist Ann Ellis Hanson recently outlined the history of their study and how in 1928 one of the early pioneers claimed that "proper philologists were loathe even to admit to reading these products from uneducated and superstitious minds of long ago."⁹ Hanson also noted how such 'subliterary' texts were often studied primarily for the comprehension of their difficult scripts.

The view of the Greeks as culturally lofty was of course not an invention of the nineteenth century but a constant element in Greek studies over many centuries. Nevertheless, a sub-current of interest in, for instance, the sexual elements of Greek and Roman rituals had always existed. Åkerblad was no exception. The Danish classical scholar Peter Oluf Brøndsted (1780–1842) sent word to him that he had found him an exceptionally beautiful silver phallus; he knew that Åkerblad would be delighted.¹⁰

Åkerblad did not shun the obvious evidence of magical practices during the 'high' centuries of Athenian civilisation; he dated the curse tablet to before Alexander but after the hundredth Olympic games, around 350 BCE: "one of the most brilliant periods of the Athenian Republic."¹¹ A common error in the study of curse tablets has been to date them too late. One of the modern authorities proposes that the reason for this was an unwillingness to recognise that the tablets co-existed with the most "accomplished" period of ancient Greek history.¹² Åkerblad did not commit this

⁹ Ann Ellis Hanson, "Papyrology: A Discipline in Flux," in Most, *Disciplining Classics*, 194.

¹⁰ Peter Oluf Brøndsted to Thorvaldsen, 6 July 1813, Florence, nr. 15, 1813, m3, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen; Brøndsted to JDÅ (draft) 2 December 1815, Copenhagen, I 24v, NKS 1578, KBK.

¹¹ Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*, 51.

¹² Christopher A. Faraone, *Talismans and Trojan Horses: Guardian Statues in Ancient Greek Myth and Ritual* (New York: Oxford UP, 1992), 114f. Even Dodds, who recognised the Greeks' 'irrationality' proposed that this was a reaction against the Enlightenment (the word he uses) of high classical times after the plague and disastrous war with Sparta and thus negates a continuity of magical practices running alongside the 'high' beliefs, *Greeks and the Irrational*, 188ff.

particular error. He explained why this period of greatness left no trace on the tablet:

If no trace [of this great period] can be found on our tablet, it should be remembered that the philosophy of the few does not quickly change the superstition of the people, but rather that philosophy and superstition live together under the same roof for a long time. The author of the curses on our tablet, because he had many enemies during his life, and as he was not buried in a humble tomb we must assume he had a certain status in society, that does not mean, and which often appears to be the case, that he did not have the same beliefs as the people, something that the present monument [the tablet] seems to attest.¹³

Åkerblad's conclusion is that there was a co-existence of 'high beliefs,' that is religion and philosophy, and popular superstition. He also considered the place where the tablet was found. The grave was not that of a poor person, and he used this fact to draw conclusions about the social extraction of the dead. The deceased was of some standing, but in spite of this adhered to the beliefs of the 'people.' Åkerblad supposed that the tablet was connected to the person buried in this particular tomb. We now know that this does not have to be the case. Tablets were also left in other people's tombs; especially favoured were those who had died violently or persons whose death was deemed premature.

Åkerblad did not immediately consider the tablet to be a product of an "uneducated and superstitious mind." Instead he stressed that different beliefs coexisted. Åkerblad also made clear that there were many points in common between these Greek curse tablets and Egyptian and other 'oriental' expressions of religious beliefs and rituals. He did not portray Greek religion in isolation, nor in any way as intrinsically more developed than any other Eastern Mediterranean belief system. After all, he was a proficient Phoenician scholar and probably knew as much as could be known at this very early stage of Phoenician studies. Current scholars of culture and religion in the Eastern Mediterranean hold a view that is probably closer to Åkerblad's own understanding than at any other time in the past. The focus on ancient Mediterranean interaction is a growing field in classical studies and orientalism, and the two disciplines are in certain respects merging again.¹⁴

¹³ Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*, 51–52.

¹⁴ Oriental influences on Greek culture, religion and ritual practices are far ranging, see for a brief introduction e.g.: Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution: Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992);

Åkerblad wrote to Ciampi in Pisa and asked him to forward the publication to his brother, who was more interested in the subject. He wanted Ciampi's brother: "to make a reasoned critique, not so much for the language... but for the things in it, whereof many are new and likewise hazardous."¹⁵ He was right that he was on to something new; it was not until the 1850s that his study would be followed by renewed interest in the tablets. This was also recognized when the treatise was reviewed in the French occupiers' principal organ, *Giornale politico del dipartimento di Roma*. The review also underlined the clarity of Åkerblad's writing, contrasting it with the "strange and insufferable" style of fellow Italian antiquaries.¹⁶

Even if many of Åkerblad's conjectures and interpretations have been superseded, he managed to hypothesise and understand many of the tablets' features and their change over time. The tablet he described was found in a grave near Piraeus in the Athens area (Plates 28–29). He compared it to other examples and justly assigned them to later periods and other geographical contexts. While working with Dodwell's tablet he searched around Rome to see if he could find other examples and Brøndsted gave him a transcription of a lead tablet that had been found in Athens in 1812 (Figure 58). Åkerblad published it together with Dodwell's curse tablet in his treatise.

Later tablets were often inscribed with strange signs, largely incomprehensible and today called *charaktêres*. Other types of writing involved *voces mysticae*: that is, words written in normal letters but with no known meaning, sometimes resembling Hebrew words. Åkerblad also discussed to what extent a given text on a tablet was formulaic and whether specialized artisans were responsible for crafting tablets. Whether the making of the tablets was a special craft and how they were bought and distributed is a moot point. It also has a bearing on the question of the degree to which the tablets were 'individual' or rather swatches of text where names of relevant persons were added as the tablet was customised for the client.

Åkerblad's work on the curse tablet can be compared to his attempts to interpret Phoenician inscriptions; it offered a similar set of problems.

Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis: Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2004). Another recent example: Carolina López-Ruiz, *When the Gods Were Born: Greek Cosmogonies and the Near East* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010).

¹⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 1 September 1813, Autografsamlingen, KB.

¹⁶ *Giornale politico del dipartimento di Roma*, 22 September 1813.

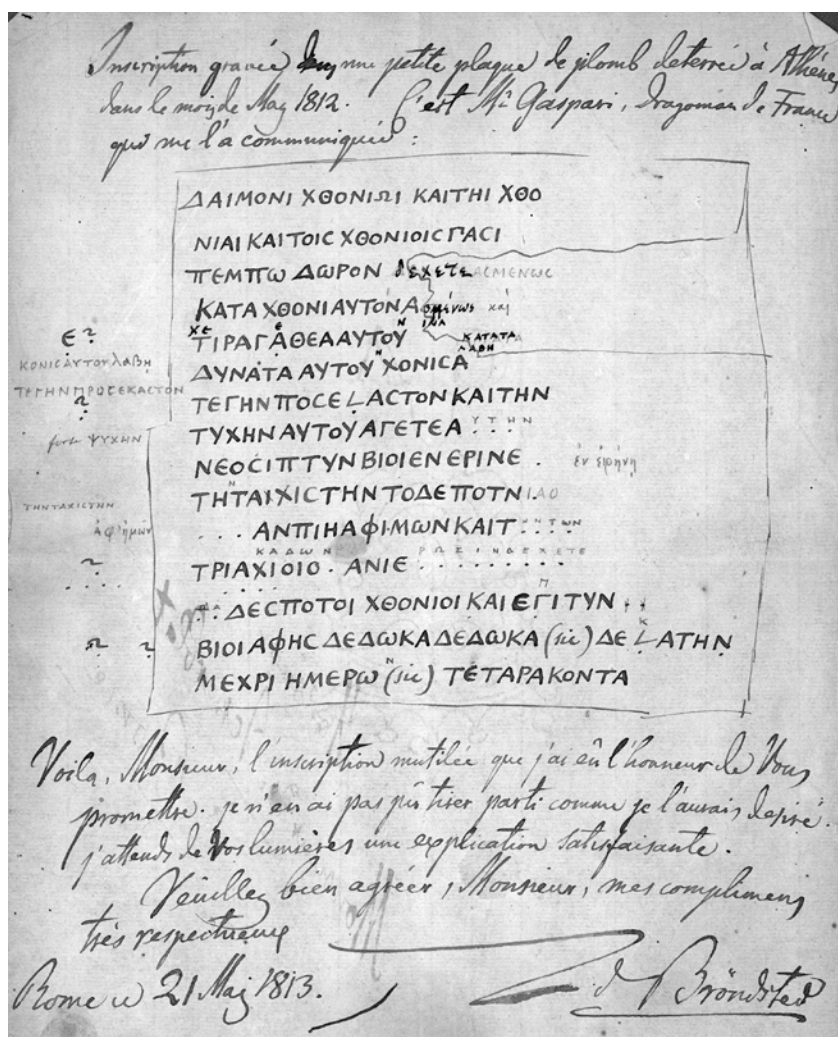


Figure 58. Brøndsted's (21 May 1813) note to Åkerblad communicating the text of a curse tablet found 1812 in Athens. The pencil annotations are Åkerblad's. This is incidentally the only known original letter to Åkerblad. N72, KB.

In both cases there were graphic riddles, often unreadable text, and they referred to religious and mythological contexts that were little known. In addition they offered a range of issues concerning the development and transmission of the alphabet and how letter-shapes changed over time in the Eastern Mediterranean. In his dissertation he referred several times to his Rosetta *Lettre*, possibly in an effort to remind the reader of his recent fame. He refuted Herodotus' claim that the Greeks adopted the alphabet from the Phoenicians in a single instance. Instead, Åkerblad hypothesized a long period when various writing systems interacted and overlapped, giving as an example how the Copts adapted the Greek alphabet by adding signs from the Egyptian Demotic writing.

Working with the curse tablet encouraged Åkerblad to consider the similarities between the society he lived in and that of long-lost Athens. He implies that if the tablet's author resorted to curses against his enemies, he probably had good reasons for it: "In effect the desire for vengeance is innate in man's heart, and the oppressed finding himself too weak to avenge the injustices he has suffered, had to resort to address the guardian deities of justice to obtain from them what he was denied by men."¹⁷

It is clear that Åkerblad in some ways regarded himself as a victim of injustice. His career was finished and he, rightly or wrongly, blamed his opponents for hindering his advancement in Swedish foreign service. Defamation and slander had their effects and there was no way to seek redress. His only hope was that time would heal the wounds and make people forget the insults and their effects. Åkerblad had been the target of rumours during his first years in Rome. He wrote to Ciampi and thanked him for not believing the gossip:

I can assure you that it is not an Italian but rather a vagabond from the other side of the mountains who has, and I do not know for what reason, taken pleasure in calumniating me with my friends as well as ridiculing me in some letters he wrote me, which I have never answered.¹⁸

The invocation of deities and their acts is a frequent element of Greek tragedies, and when Åkerblad wrote about the curse tablet he discussed how curses and superstition were referred to and used by ancient Greek playwrights. His favourite, Euripides, had mixed attitudes toward superstition and religion, at times criticizing its influence but also using it as a central component to explain human action. Once again Åkerblad was

¹⁷ Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*, 15.

¹⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 23 December 1811, KVHAA.

writing from experience when he described how an Athenian audience reacted to the use of curses and invocations in a play:

Similar [to the curse tablet's] invocations were recited on Athens' scene, and they must have had a vehement effect on the spectators, especially considering that many of them would have examples from recent memory, and maybe not even rare at that, of relatives, or friends who had fallen victim to others' oppression, or perfidy, and who had had to deposit their laments in their tombs, incised on lead, so that the Erinyes . . . would give them justice in the other life, justice that was denied them in this life.¹⁹

The Erinyes are the female furies of the Greek underworld; they are described in the *Iliad* as those who take vengeance on whoever has sworn a false oath.²⁰ Even though Åkerblad had dated his tablet to around 350 BCE, he was well aware of the use and importance of curses and superstition in the previous centuries and immediately put himself in the place of audiences at the time when the great Greek tragedies were performed.

Åkerblad was not a religious believer and would probably not have resorted to magic to deal with his enemies. There was, however, no lack of belief in magic in Rome at this time. An episode at an Egyptian event that Åkerblad may well have witnessed can serve as an example. When a thirteenth-century BCE Egyptian obelisk was re-erected at Villa Celimontana in 1817, a workman was seriously injured and had to have a limb amputated on the spot. This was interpreted as an evil omen and many Romans subsequently avoided the obelisk. This belief lived on for a century.²¹

It is easy to understand that Åkerblad wanted to punish those who, according to him, had borne false witness against him. He knew that if one lacked influence, it was almost impossible to get redress or to be treated with justice by those who held power, whether in ancient Athens or contemporary Constantinople, Stockholm or Rome. His years in Italy would be constantly marred by what some Athenians probably would not have hesitated to call curses.

Cabals

During his years in Italy Åkerblad became embroiled in battles with his former Swedish masters, not dissimilar to the troubles he had experienced

¹⁹ Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*, 16.

²⁰ Book 3, lines 278ff.; book 19, lines 259ff.

²¹ Erik Iversen, *Obelisks in exile: The Obelisks of Rome* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1968), 113.

in Constantinople. It appears that this time he was the actual object of a smear campaign, and only to a lesser extent the initiator. He was now a famous scholar with a small but important publishing record with probably a wider international reputation than any other living Swedish literary or linguistic scholar.

Åkerblad continued to petition Stockholm for a position in Rome, either as consul or as art agent. As a faraway protestant country, Sweden had little contact with the Papal States. It was not until the modern Italian state was created that Sweden sent envoys to Rome. Not even Prussia had found it necessary to appoint an envoy to Rome. When Humboldt was recalled to Berlin in 1808 he was told: "It might be pleasant to live in Rome, but a representation there is now of little use to the State."²²

Åkerblad had already had contact with the Swedish representative in Florence, Johan Claes Lagerswärd. Lagerswärd had established himself in Italy in 1789, and for a long time he was the only Swedish diplomat in Italy. There were consuls, mostly Italians but also a couple of Swedes, in several port cities, as well as in Naples and Rome. The most plausible explanation for Lagerswärd's extreme animosity towards Åkerblad is fear of competition. If Åkerblad was ever assigned a position in Italy, his own posting in Florence could be at risk. Lagerswärd became a vocal critic of Åkerblad as soon as it became clear that Åkerblad had settled down in Rome. In 1810 Lagerswärd wrote to Stockholm reporting on Åkerblad's alleged battles: "A learned gentleman resident in Rome at war with all Italian scholars, despiser of Sweden and Swedes is Our oriental Mr Åkerblad."²³ A few months later, Lagerswärd wrote several pages detailing Åkerblad's sins. The first sentence in this "histoire de M. Åkerblad" spelled out the one offence that would become the most frequent when discrediting Åkerblad in Rome: "M. Åkerblad is still consequent in his contempt for everything Swedish." He went on:

he thinks that we poor Swedes do not know to appreciate [his talents] enough, and employs the support of... [the Swedish ambassador in Paris] to recommend him in Sweden where he refused in times past the position as Secretary at the Royal Museum (after having lost the position as Legation

²² Wilhelm to Caroline von Humboldt, 16 November 1808, Erfurt, in Humboldt, *Briefen*, 3:18.

²³ Lagerswärd to Engeström, 2 January 1810, Florence, no. 254, A-L, 1810:1, Ep E 10:8, KB.

Secretary in Constantinople because he left his post without leave, unable to live in peace with d'Ohsson).²⁴

Lagerswärd goes on to list a full range of other examples of Åkerblad's inability to collaborate and propensity to make trouble. He accused Åkerblad of failing to go to Stralsund when recalled from Paris, of being unable to work with his superiors, of staying in Italy and of disobeying repeated orders to return to Sweden. Lagerswärd wrote that he had sent Åkerblad money that would have enabled his return to Sweden and that the issue of passports would not have been a problem because Åkerblad's status as a correspondent of the *Institut National* in Paris would have allowed him to travel through occupied areas. Another of Åkerblad's offences was, mentioned above, that he survived "by being maintained by an old woman" and that in addition to this effrontery he mocked fellow Swedish subjects because of their economic problems. According to Lagerswärd, Åkerblad regarded everyone who did not know Coptic or Arabic, or at least Greek, as ignoramuses.

The similarities with Åkerblad's battle with Mouradgea d'Ohsson in Constantinople in the 1790s are striking. A power shift had occurred in Stockholm and both Åkerblad and his new opponent wrote to government minister Lars von Engeström (1751–1826). After the loss of Finland and the dethroning of the king a new constitution had been introduced in Sweden whereby royal power was reduced in favour of the parliament and the estates. The foreign service was reformed and Engeström, an experienced diplomat, was appointed minister of state for foreign affairs [statsminister för utrikes ärendena]. Engeström was also an influential chancellor of Lund University in 1810–24. He amassed a considerable collection of books, manuscripts and art during his travels and foreign postings, and was aware of Åkerblad's stature as an international scholar.

Åkerblad first wrote to Engeström in 1810 pleading for a position which would also let him publish, something the bookish Engeström might appreciate more than many of his colleagues: "I would get more possibilities to put together and publish several works for which I have since many years collected materials."²⁵

²⁴ Lagerswärd to Engeström, Apostille Particulière du 3. d'avril 1810, no. 257, A–L, 1810:1, Ep E 10:8, KB.

²⁵ JDÅ to Engeström, 10 January 1811, Rome, Enskilda personer, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, 1809–1813, Huvudarkivet, Kabinettet, UD, SNA.

Neither Åkerblad nor Lagerswärd seemed to have gained any advantages in this first instance of their battle in 1810–11. As the political upheavals redrew the map of Europe, both tried to turn the changes in Italy to their own benefit. After France's fall from power in Italy it seemed possible that Sweden would change its representation there, and both Lagerswärd and Åkerblad took the opportunity to petition Engeström. Åkerblad repeated his case for an appointment in Rome while Lagerswärd asked to be raised to the position of minister at the re-established court in Florence. Lagerswärd made clear that he was not demanding higher pay and underlined that to appoint any other person would cost the Swedish crown more than maintaining him in Florence. He knew about Åkerblad's insistent demands for money and his own modest financial demands were well-suited to Stockholm's perennial need to economize.

Åkerblad in turn had heard that the mission in Paris had not yet been re-opened after the fall of Napoleon and so suggested: "I infinitely regret that no diplomatic position within my reach is vacant at this moment. However, as I have by hazard learnt that the King's legation in Paris has not yet been established, I dare to supplicate Your Excellency... to... re-insert [me] in my former functions at that legation."²⁶ The political changes in Restoration Rome had made it virtually impossible to survive as a free scholar. Eventually Engeström decided to partly give in to Åkerblad's demands and he was granted a small governmental pension.

Åkerblad thanked Engeström profusely; he was "accustomed for the past 10 years to always in vain solicit" favours. He also excused himself for his frankness and complained about the meagreness of the pension: "but the fact is that when this pension is converted... it is reduced to so little... that even with the strictest economy I despair of being able to live four months of the year with the entire pension."²⁷ He was in debt after living without a salary for nine years.

Relations between Åkerblad and Lagerswärd did not improve. In 1817 Lagerswärd visited Rome and continued to Naples from where he wrote a long private letter to Engeström defending Ulisse Pentini, the Swedish consul in Rome. He took every opportunity to attack Åkerblad and accused him of trying to bring about Pentini's demise:

²⁶ JDÅ to Engeström, Rome 28 November 1814, *Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, Enskilda personer, 1814–1816*, vol. 2, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

I believe it my duty to privately report that I have in Rome found a Swedish Cabale against our resident agent Mister Pentini, which began already in 1808 when Mr. Åkerblad thought that his own interest required him to bring about the fall of Pentini, so that he himself would obtain a salaried position, for the supervision and management of the Swedes residing in Rome.²⁸

This was the preamble to a new list of Åkerblad's sins. Åkerblad had criticized Pentini for his failed businesses; he was an "old dealer in bijouterie, and what is worse, bankrupt . . . and he certainly is not of much honour to our nation," adding that the Swedes coming to Rome did not feel confident when presented by him to the pope.²⁹ But Lagerswärd reminded Stockholm of an important fact; Pentini worked for free: "Such a person, who does not cost Sweden anything, but who disburses his own funds to maintain his position and who is happy with the mere honour of displaying the Swedish shield over his entrance and a *Fantasy uniform*, should not be removed according to my opinion."³⁰ Lagerswärd was not mocking the diplomatic uniform that he himself wore with pride, but Pentini's *fantasy* uniform. Åkerblad's case was different. In Lagerswärd's view he would be a burden to the state, because someone so dismissive towards the fatherland could not be of service to the Swedish community in Rome: "Åkerblad does not at all strive to Nationalize himself with the *stupid Swedes* who also all do not envy his literary merits that are joined with his reputation of being an *être ridicule*."

Nationalism and love for the fatherland was again an issue. This time Åkerblad refrained from expressing himself with the same degree of acrimony with which he had criticized Mouradgea for being Armenian. The tables had turned and it was now he who was accused of not being Swedish enough.

Lagerswärd was much less supportive of Pentini in correspondence with his friend Giovanni Ferri de Saint-Constant. Lagerswärd repeatedly complained about Pentini and mentioned getting him replaced, but not by Åkerblad.³¹ It is pointless to accuse Lagerswärd of duplicity or Åkerblad of denigrating Italians or Swedes. They were competing for scarce resources and both were far away from Stockholm. They were of opposing

²⁸ Lagerswärd to Engeström, 2 January 1818, Naples, Ep E 10:20, KB.

²⁹ JDÅ to Engeström, Rome 28 November 1814, Skrivelser till utrikesstatsministern, Enskilda personer, 1814–1816, vol. 2, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

³⁰ Lagerswärd to Engeström, 2 January 1818, Naples, Ep E 10:20, KB.

³¹ 2 and 19 December 1815, Florence, in Lagerswärd, *Lettere a Giovanni Ferri de Saint-Constant*, ed. Vittorio E. Giuntella (Rome: Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiano, 1968), 46, 47. Åkerblad knew and appreciated Ferri. JDÅ to Ciampi, 24 May 1813, KVHAA.

political opinions. Lagerswärd was a convinced royalist and predicted that "America will become a monarchy within 50 years, when it has experienced enough of republicanism."³² That said, the positions of Åkerblad and Lagerswärd were not comparable. Lagerswärd was still empowered to administer privileges, small and large. He implored his friend Ferri to find him someone to deliver river Po sturgeons to his Florentine diplomatic dinners a few times a year. This service would be remunerated by appointing the fish-supplier as Swedish vice-consul.³³

Åkerblad obliquely acknowledged that he had lost touch with Swedish politics, noticing that Lagerswärd was much better informed than himself. He tried to follow what was happening in the north, but news was sparse and difficult to interpret during the wars. He wrote to Countess d'Albany in Florence about the fate of a weak Sweden being caught up in the designs of the great powers:

What to tell you about my poor fatherland? We want, it is said, to be neutral, and that is no doubt well thought, and quite useful for the moment; because if we have to be eaten up one day, like all the other small states, it seems to me that we would not do badly to defer this fatal moment as long as possible. The great politician M. Lagerswärd will explain this to you much better than I could do.³⁴

It is impossible to judge to what extent Lagerswärd's smear campaign against Åkerblad was successful in Stockholm. It is feasible that their respective letters were read with exasperation, as had been the case during the Constantinople mission battles. The decision to award a pension to Åkerblad was an act of mercy on Engström's part.

It is easy to understand that Åkerblad was sympathetic toward the ancient Greeks who, when they sensed that they had suffered injustices, tried to vindicate themselves by appealing to the dark forces of the underworld.

³² Lagerswärd to Ferri, 7 January 1830, Florence, in Lagerswärd, *Lettere*, 164.

³³ Lagerswärd to Ferri, 9 March 1817, *ibid.*, 63.

³⁴ JDÅ to Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome, in *Albany*, 132. Lagerswärd was cited by Stolberg's other correspondents, he had some weight as a political commentator in Florentine society.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

ORIENTAL ROME

Åkerblad was soon integrated into the Roman oriental community. It was mainly comprised of people from the church. Rome was the centre of Catholic missionary activities and the Near Eastern community was important. Priests from the Levant had for centuries worked in Rome and clerics from the Maronite church in Lebanon had their own college in Rome, as did other Eastern churches.

The central institution for the study and teaching of oriental languages was still the same as when Åkerblad visited Rome in the 1780s: the Propaganda Fide. The most important of its seminaries, the *Collegio Urbano*, had hosted students from most continents throughout the eighteenth century. But the Propaganda went through difficult years. When Åkerblad first arrived in Rome in 1798, a few days before the first French occupation, he had witnessed the Propaganda gradually losing its central position. Even after Stefano Borgia's return to Rome in 1802 the Propaganda had difficulties in assuming its old role as a centre for oriental studies. When the French occupied Rome for the second time the printing offices were sacked again and by 1812 the printing offices were closed and the activities of the Propaganda itself much reduced.¹

Åkerblad explained his oriental social life in a letter to Friederike Brun in early 1810, less than a year after he had established himself in Rome. The second part was cited when discussing Åkerblad and Champollion's obsession with languages:

You know Madam, that I am bit Levantine, and that all the Arabs, Greeks, Chaldeans, Ethiopians etc. of Rome regard me as almost their compatriot and that they often come and visit me. One of these messieurs, a miserable man and I think somewhat related to the prophet Jonah, often spoke to me about his Chaldean [Aramaic] literature, that I knew something of once upon a time but now had neglected for many years. The knowledge of my Ninivean stung me a bit, and well, I begin again with Chaldean, engaging my man to give me lessons. After that day, which was a month ago,

¹ Josef Metzler, "Die Kongregation in der Zeit Napoleons (1795–1815)," in Metzler, *Sacrae congregationis propaganda*; Palazzolo, *Editoria e istituzioni a Roma*, 40f.

goodbye Greek, antiquities, Coptic, society, amusements, I am not occupied with anything but Chaldean. I well know it is a great folly, but what do you want, I have been carried away, and one does not become wise when one wants.²

Jonah's relative was certainly a man of the church. The year after Åkerblad had become obsessed with Aramaic it was another language's turn. This time he wrote to Ciampi: "I have for the past few months plunged myself into certain barbarous investigations; an Ethiopian priest comes home to me every day to teach me the *cursed cries* of his language."³

Daily lessons meant that Åkerblad made quick progress, and after a few months Åkerblad was usually close to fluent in a new language. The drawing below is movingly dedicated to Åkerblad's teacher: "My teacher and my beloved, priest Gäbrä Mämfäs Qəddus [Servant of the Holy Spirit] Giyorgis... teacher and instructor of the Geez and Amhara language[s]." Åkerblad thus studied both the ancient Ethiopian Ge'ez—still used in liturgy—and the living Amharic (Figure 59).

The presence of the church and clerics from all over the Christian world made Rome a centre for oriental learning. Åkerblad was not only a student, but he most probably also taught several oriental languages while in Rome. Already in Paris he had tutored fellow orientalists in spoken Arabic. Just after he arrived in Rome he had noted one of the Humboldt children's particular language abilities. Åkerblad offered his services: "Åkerblad asked Caroline if he should give her lessons in Turkish or Arabic, her language talent is quite a sensation." His friend Girolamo Amati taught her Ancient Greek, a position he likely procured through the intermediation of Åkerblad.⁴

The Roman collections also gave Åkerblad opportunities to work with oriental manuscripts. On Sacy's request he translated Arabic religious texts.⁵ Intriguingly, several of Åkerblad's Coptic manuscripts, now in Russian collections, are inscribed with the name of the Coptic church in Rome, Santo Stefano degli Abessini. Parenthetically it can be added that

² JDÅ to Friederike Brun, 7 February 1810, Rome, fol. 147, NKS 1992, KBK.

³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 16 April 1811, Forteg.

⁴ Caroline to Wilhelm von Humboldt, 12 April 1809, Rome, in Humboldt, *Briefen*, 3:131; Caroline von Humboldt to Welcker, 29 December 1809, Rome, in Humboldt and Welcker, *Briefwechsel*, 73.

⁵ William L. Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, & History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 97f., 124; Tjitze Baarda, "The Author of the Arabic Diatessaron," in *Miscellanea neotestamentica: studia ad Novum Testamentum prae-sertim*..., ed., Baarda (Leiden: Brill 1978), 61.



Figure 59. Åkerblad's drawing of his Ethiopic language teacher Giyorgis. N72, KB.

there were not only oriental clerics in Rome. Åkerblad was acquainted with churchmen from many continents; he was, for instance, a close friend of the Mexican ex-Jesuit Pedro José Marquez. Marquez participated in the lively Mexican debate on pre-conquista history and could certainly have informed Åkerblad about both recent archaeological finds in Mexico as well as discussions on American writing systems.⁶

In a letter to Champollion Åkerblad remarked that some of his Arabic dictionaries had been left in Florence.⁷ He was still working on his Coptic dictionary, which he hoped to publish. He also followed—as best he could in a city where foreign books were slow to arrive—what was happening in the area of Egyptology and oriental studies. Åkerblad initially mentioned to Champollion that he had not occupied himself with Egyptian things for a couple of years. Yet Sacy maintained that Åkerblad had told him that he had made some progress in his work with the Rosetta inscription and

⁶ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World: Histories, Epistemologies, and Identities in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001), 254–58.

⁷ JDÅ to Champollion, 26 February 1812, Rome, NAF 20357, BNF.

had managed to read more words in the Demotic inscription. Åkerblad confirmed this in a letter to Champollion.⁸

The list of instances and references confirming that Åkerblad occupied himself with oriental matters during his time in Rome can be extended (Figure 60). The most obvious example is the treatise he published in 1817 on a Phoenician inscription.⁹ His friend William Gell communicated the inscription to him. Gell has been described as an “Egyptological clearing-house” when he lived in Naples.¹⁰ Gell furnished Åkerblad with both Greek and Phoenician material (Figure 53) and Åkerblad insisted when requesting new inscriptions: “Excuse me, dear Sir William, my obstinacy; you know that the Swedes are a headstrong set of people.”¹¹

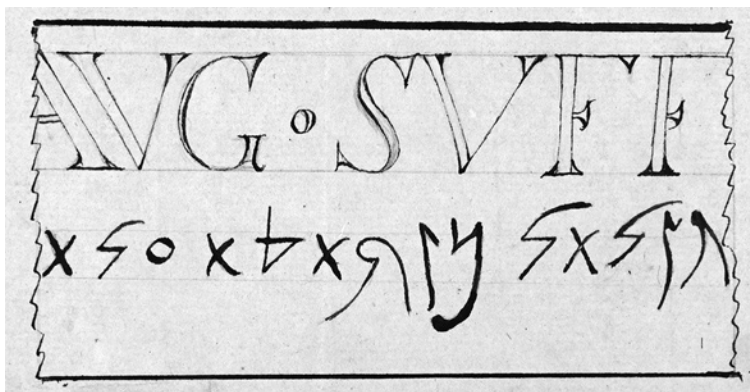


Figure 60. Åkerblad followed all publications on Phoenician matters that he could access in Rome. This is his copy of a bilingual inscription published in 1814 by the Spanish traveller Ali Bey [Domingo Badia y Leblich], *Voyages d'Ali Bey el Abbassi en Afrique et en Asie pendant les années 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 et 1807*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1814). N72, KB.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Åkerblad, *Lettre sur une inscription phénicienne trouvée à Athènes* (Rome, 1817). The treatise was republished by Millin in the journal he started after that the *Magasin encyclopédique* folded, the *Annales Encyclopédiques* 2 (1817): 193–214.

¹⁰ H. R. Hall, “Letters of Champollion le Jeune and of Seyffarth to Sir William Gell,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 2 (1915), 78; Jason Thompson, “Purveyor-General to the Hieroglyphics: Sir William Gell and the Development of Egyptology,” in Jeffreys, *Views of Ancient Egypt*.

¹¹ JDÅ to William Gell, 9 November 1817, Rome, fol. 66, Add MS 63,617, BL. Åkerblad proposed Gell as a member of the Archaeological academy in Rome. Giuseppe Antonio Guattani to Gell, 4 July 1817, Rome, fol. 61, Add MS 63,617, BL.

Travellers making their way to Egypt visited Åkerblad in Rome. One of them was Henry Salt. Salt had been appointed British consul in Cairo. He planned to search for another copy—with a more complete hieroglyphic text—of the decree inscribed on the Rosetta Stone. Åkerblad wrote to Thomas Young:

I had the pleasure to see Mr. Salt on his passage to Naples, where he embarked for Malta and Egypt. He is certainly a very active man; and though he probably may not discover a duplicate of the Rosetta-Stone, he will possibly succeed in other researches in the very interesting country where he resides, in a character which undoubtedly enables him to do more than any common traveller.¹²

Like so many others, Salt remarked on Åkerblad's exceptional linguistic capabilities: "I also became acquainted with Signior Akerblad at Rome, who is another of these extraordinary linguists—his knowledge is *confined to twenty-three*; but he has besides made some successful efforts in decyphering the hieroglyphics, and has promised to assist me in my Egyptian researches."¹³

One can assume that everyone who passed through Rome and was seriously interested in Egyptian or oriental matters made a point of visiting Åkerblad. This was certainly also the case for the scholars with an interest in classical Greece who came to Rome. Again it must be underlined that there was a great deal of overlap between oriental and Greek studies. This is also evident when reading Åkerblad's two early Roman dissertations. Both the first on the Greek bronze inscriptions and the second on the curse tablets contain frequent references to oriental matters.

¹² JDÅ to Young, 19 April 1816, Rome, fol. 29, Add MS 21,026, BL; Young, *Miscellaneous Works*, 72. English in the original, quoted from the manuscript.

¹³ Henry Salt to William R. Hamilton, 28 January 1816, Malta, in J. J. Halls, *The life and correspondence of Henry Salt*, 2 vols. (London, 1834), 1:441.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ART

Maria Pia Donato criticizes Åkerblad and his fellow scholars for maintaining the glorious Roman antiquarian tradition as expressed in Åkerblad's 1811 publication. She also points out that the proceedings of the archaeological academy seldom dealt with ongoing excavations, despite the fact that they were under the noses of the very academicians who held their meetings overlooking the Forum Romanum.¹ If we look at the printed dissertations she is right. However, Åkerblad's correspondence is full of archaeological news and discussions. A similar interest is reflected in the large amount of brief treatises and pamphlets printed by the parties involved in the work, many of whom were academicians.

Once the French occupiers had settled down, numerous excavations were begun. Åkerblad was unhappy with the methods employed. He had quickly become acquainted with Gérando's successor Camille de Tournon, who held the authority to grant permissions for archaeological exploits. In 1811 he obtained the permission to open up a hole where it was suspected that the Forum's main artery Via Sacra could be found. He wrote to Ciampi about the exceptional find in this "erudite hole":

The excavations around the Campidoglio continue, but not according to my taste. Recently our prefect permitted me to open up a dig in my own way, and already after a few days a good piece of the via sacra could be seen in the open. So if you come to Rome, you may follow the steps of the great master Horace, but it is necessary that you hurry up, I am afraid that this very erudite hole soon will be filled in again.²

Åkerblad was not the first Swede to dig in Rome. His one-time employer of sorts, Carl Fredric Fredenheim, had lead excavations at the Forum Romanum in 1788–89.³

¹ Donato, *Accademie romane*, 218.

² JDÅ to Ciampi, 16 April 1811, Forteg. The find was reported in the *Giornale del Campidoglio*, 20 April 1811, no. 47, 185, where some scepticism about further investigations was voiced: "Sadly it [the Via Sacra] is covered by thirty palmi of earth; something which completely removes the hope of clearing it entirely."

³ Carl Bildt, "Die Ausgrabungen C. F. Fredenheims auf dem Forum Romanum 1788–1789," *Mitteilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung*



Figure 61. Gustaf af Sillén. The Forum in the late 1780s. P. 92–93, X 292 f, UUL.

The Forum as we see it today is almost completely a nineteenth century ‘construction.’ Before the clearing it was called the *Campo Vaccino*, the cattle field (Figure 61). It was well-known that it had once constituted the heart of the capital, but only later, when the classical street level had been uncovered, did the location of buildings and monuments become clear. The level of the ground was several metres higher than it is today and houses, churches and debris covered the area. The area further down by the Tiber was known as the *Campo Boario*, the ox field; it often hosted Rome’s cattle market. It only became forbidden in 1814 to introduce carts, cattle and dump garbage among the ruins.⁴

Åkerblad had convinced Tournon that his project was a valid endeavour. He managed to find funds or to get himself assigned a work party from a Roman prison. It was common practice to use chain gangs as digging labour. In 1811 there was other work going on in the immediate neighbourhood. Tournon had authorized digs to clear the temple of Antoninus

16 (1901): 3–20; Lars-Johan Stiernstedt, *Vår man i Rom: Överintendenten Carl Fredric Fredenheims italienska resa 1787–1790* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2004), 309ff.

⁴ Ronald T. Ridley, *The Pope’s Archaeologist: The Life and Times of Carlo Fea* (Rome: Quasar, 2000), 179.

and Faustina and Åkerblad's hole was probably just in front of the temple (to the left in figure 61).

Tournon followed the digs with interest and was present when the pavement of the Roman street was found. He highlighted the excitement at the find:

I was, I remember, in the midst of workers, with the learned abbé Fea and the tireless orientalist Akerblad, taken away too young from the letters, when the paving of this road appeared in light after so many centuries. How can I describe the joy of these learned antiquarians, the eagerness with which they wanted to jump down into the deep excavation to be the first to touch, to press their lips to these stones where they believed they could still see impressions of the feet of Horace and Virgil?⁵

Carlo Fea (1753–1836) was since 1801 *commissario delle antichità* and responsible for the safekeeping of Roman antiquities during papal rule, and had continued in a similar position under the French. Fea was the key contact for everyone interested in archaeology. In spite of the money and energies spent by the French government work was not proceeding, and Åkerblad was not happy:

Our digs do not proceed. our masters are too light-weight, they want and then they do not want, and later they return to wanting again, if it pleases God. A quantity of holes has been made, but no well thought-out excavation.⁶

Tournon experienced the difficulties common to any administrator far-away from central government. Paris was busy with more pressing matters; money was needed to fund increasingly engrossing wars and Rome was left to its own devices. By 1812–13 the situation was close to desperate.⁷ The great plans of the early occupation had to be abandoned. Tournon mostly wrote positively about Gérando's deeds, but remarked on his idealistic programme for Rome: "he only forgot one thing, and that was to

⁵ Camille Tournon, "Mémoire sur les travaux entrepris à Rome par l'administration français de 1810 à 1814," *Académie de Bordeaux* 2 (1821), 48. See also his *Études statistiques sur Rome et la partie occidentale des États Romains*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1831), 2:247.

⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 4 May [1811], KVHAA. This letter has no year but it mentions the recent death of Tommaso Puccini (1749–1811). *Callmer*, 220, dated it to 1816 and as he did not know the letters in the Forteguerriana collection he was not aware of the 1811 digs and thought that the digs Åkerblad referred to were his later excavations around the Phocas column.

⁷ See Tournon's increasingly distressed letters and dispatches, *Lettres inédites du comte Camille de Tournon, Préfet de Rome 1809–1814*, ed., Jaques Moulard (Paris: Champion, 1914).

remake the men who were to execute his wise orders.”⁸ According to Åkerblad, Fea’s lack of knowledge and interest was worse than the vacillation of the French:

The worst is that our head antiquarian is the very ridiculous Fea, a man who does not understand much about and cares even less about such investigations. At Veii very interesting digs have been made, great constructions were found, but everything was destroyed and covered without Fea even going there. For the last four or five years he has occupied himself with a new edition of Horace . . . so antiquities have been neglected to an incredible degree.⁹

The Veii excavations of 1810–11 led to a drawn-out court case in the 1820s, and although Fea’s Horace edition was competent it was still that of an amateur. He had promised to start another Latin edition but Åkerblad had other ideas about what Fea ought to do: “Now he wants to deal with Catullus, and I do not like it much, I would have liked him to occupy himself with the history of all the excavations in Rome and its surroundings, on which he published a first volume some years ago.”¹⁰ In spite of the mockery and the critique, Åkerblad promoted the Horace edition: “poor Fea has paid for the edition out of his own pocket.”¹¹

Åkerblad wanted Fea to tackle the history of Roman archaeology, a task for which he would have been eminently qualified. Fea could have documented the history of at least the digs during his lifetime. Since his time in Greece, Åkerblad had been aware of the severe problems with the attribution of objects, and the understanding of their context when digs were undocumented. The amount of unlicensed and amateurish digging going on in Italy was enormous, and every time work was not documented Åkerblad knew that there were losses. Most was pure pillaging, undertaken for quick profits on the antiquities market. Selling great pieces of sculpture and important archaeological objects on the foreign market had been curtailed but regulation was slack when it came to smaller items of daily use—today considered of paramount importance for dating and

⁸ Quoted in Andrea Busiri Vici, “Intorno alla rinascita dell’Accademia Romana di Archeologia (4 ottobre 1810),” *Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia*, 1971/72, 334.

⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 4 May 1811, KVHAA.

¹⁰ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 February 1812, bound with Sacy’s and Åkerblad’s Rosetta publications, shelf mark C.28.i.5, BL.

¹¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 11 January 1812, KVHAA.

contextualising sites. The market was flooded with antiquities and it was often in the sellers' interest not to reveal the artefacts' origins.

Åkerblad ridiculed or pitied the various parties, but mostly managed to keep a detached eye on the battles without getting involved. The most famous episode concerned the Colosseum. The flurry of publications it led to almost makes up a bibliography in itself.¹² Scholars in other parts of Italy enjoyed following these battles, noticing with glee how Roman antiquaries made fools of themselves. Åkerblad described the acrimonious discussions to *Courier*, wondering if all the swearing he had witnessed would end up in the printed pamphlets: "And I do not know if they will mention all the *somaro*, *bestia* and *cozzaccio* [donkey, beast and horn buttings] they said to each other, and the punch that an architect from Milan gave the antiquarian Fea; all that for the love of the Colosseum."¹³ Åkerblad later noted that there was nothing new from Rome: "The two old priests Fea and Masdeu continue their indecent and ridiculous controversy. The archaeological academy opened a few days ago [after the holiday break] but I almost never go."¹⁴

There were also natural causes for worries about the monuments. On 21 March 1812 an earthquake shook the city: "You have probably heard of the earthquake that scared us some days ago. No antique monument has been damaged, except for the Colosseum, some enormous stones fell from the cornice. All modern buildings, public as well as private have more or less suffered."¹⁵ Åkerblad's reasoning implied that what was left of the classical monuments was almost indestructible, modern buildings were not built in the same sturdy way. Tournon, who was preoccupied with both the ancient ruins and the running of the city, put it succinctly: "Those that are two thousand years old are beautiful, but the ruins of yesterday will be horrible."¹⁶

The other academy engaged in conserving Roman remains was the Accademia San Luca, the traditional academy of *belle arti*. It was founded in 1593 and was an important institution in Roman artistic life. Åkerblad was elected honorary member on 2 August 1812, just before the inauguration

¹² E.g. commentary and bibliog. in the Florentine *Giornale enciclopedico* 5, no. 56 (1813), 255f.; Ridley, *Eagle and Spade*, 217ff.

¹³ JDÅ to *Courier*, 22 December 1812, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:356.

¹⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 6 December 1813, KVHAA.

¹⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 2 April 1812, KVHAA.

¹⁶ Tournon, *Lettres inédites*, 179.

of the academy's new school of arts.¹⁷ This was another instance of the French promotion of education and part of Gérando's professed goal to make Rome the empire's capital of arts. The academy was given new premises and the inauguration, held on Napoleon's name-day, was lavish.

The artistic community of Rome was of great significance. It was largely international and Åkerblad knew most of the foreign and Italian artists. One of the most entertaining testimonies is Åkerblad's notebook that contains an alphabetical list of more than 110 artists active in Rome. It was mentioned above in the chapter on the Roman Republic; the first entries date from his sojourn in 1798–99. He probably compiled the list to aid his ambition to land the appointment of art agent or Swedish consul in Rome. All genres of artists were included along with the field they worked in: landscape, history, miniatures, portraits etc; draughtsmen, sculptors, architects, restorers, mosaicists, cameo makers and more. Among the most salient of Åkerblad's frank comments are: "Teodoro Russian, landscape painter, the wife a whore; Wicard Drawer and Thief; de Angelis, historical painter, bad but acclaimed." The Russian painter with wife was most probably the famous Fyodor Matveyev. Åkerblad's comment on the sculptor Thorvaldsen was mentioned above: "Thorwaldsen Danish does nothing." He could also be appreciative: "Berini, intaglio artist, the best in Rome; Camuccini, History painter... of talent and great application; Reinhart German landscape painter, one of the best; Canova, Sculptor, the first in Italy."¹⁸

In 1812 Åkerblad's friend Canova was the president of both the archaeological academy and the San Luca. His fame as Europe's foremost sculptor was cemented and there was a virtual 'Canova-mania' that obsessed both patrons and the general art public. Canova's career is thoroughly described in all its aspects; suffice to say that Napoleon commissioned several works from him and the English wanted him to design a monument commemorating Nelson.

According to Åkerblad, Canova was excessively feted. Canova's friend and Åkerblad's acquaintance, Francesco Leopoldo Cicognara, was in the process of publishing a multi-volume history of modern sculpture. Åkerblad was unhappy with some aspects of Cicognara's book:

¹⁷ 2 August 1812, Registro Delle Congregazioni di Belle Arti dell'anno 1812...1819, Archivio storico, Accademia di San Luca, Rome.

¹⁸ N72, KB.

It appears that this worthy man had no other intention with his work than to make a eulogy, at this point useless, of our Canova, that is at least what the author himself told me, what will displease everyone is that no other contemporary sculptor is mentioned by Cicognara, only Canova, a ridiculous injustice, that not even the most passionate friendship can ever excuse.¹⁹

Åkerblad visited the studios and followed the sculptors' work. There were several Scandinavian sculptors in Rome; the most well-known was Bertel Thorvaldsen, who competed with Canova for commissions. Canova was increasingly busy and had to decline proposals.

In 1811 an extensive renovation of the Palazzo del Quirinale began. The palace had been the papal summer residence and in time-honoured fashion the new power holders used the same building, changing its name to *Palais Impérial de Monte Cavallo*. The palace was intended to become Napoleon's Roman residence. It was planned that Napoleon should visit Rome, but this never happened. After the fall of the French the pope moved back to the palace and when the Kingdom of Italy was created it became the residence of the royal family. Today it is inhabited by the Italian president.

The iconographic programme for the redecoration was elaborate and recalled a number of events from both classical and recent history. Both Napoleon and Roman Caesars were depicted. The themes were wide-ranging: classical writers, artists and scientists were put alongside the great Baghdad caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd, who was in turn accompanied by Arabic scholars and philosophers.²⁰

Canova was the artistic advisor in charge of palace decorations. A number of artists were contracted, among them Thorvaldsen. Thorvaldsen's contribution to the decoration of the palace was a frieze, showing the entry of Alexander the Great into Babylon, which was, of course, a reference to the military glories of Napoleon and his future triumphant entry into Rome. The bas-relief was based on a passage in Quintus Curtius Rufus' *Life of Alexander*. Napoleon's identification with previous great military commanders is well-known.²¹

¹⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 19 September 1812, KVHAA.

²⁰ D. Ternois, "Napoléon et la décoration du Palais Impérial de Monte Cavallo en 1811–1813," *Revue de l'art* 7 (1970), 78.

²¹ Bjarne Jørnæs, "Thorvaldsen's 'Triumph of Alexander' in the Palazzo del Quirinale," in *Thorvaldsen: l'ambiente, l'influsso, il mito*, ed., Patrick Kragelund and Mogens Nykjær (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1991).



Figure 62. The end of the frieze *in situ* at the Quirinale. The Greek troops leave Babylon laden with booty and with prisoners in tow. Thorvaldsens Museum.

Thorvaldsen's frieze, over 35 metres long, stresses that Alexander entered Babylon without violence (Figure 62). This was how Napoleon's intended entry into Rome was planned. The frieze depicted Alexander and his Macedonian soldiers but also the defeated Persians and Babylonians. Thorvaldsen had not dealt with oriental motifs before and needed advice on how to represent 'orientals' and the city of Babylon. Åkerblad acted as his archaeological and iconographic advisor.²² Åkerblad wrote how he was present every day during the making of the frieze in the palace in the spring of 1812: "The digs become more interesting every day and the artists are working with the decoration of the Quirinal Palace, I spend quite a few hours there every day."²³ At the time nothing was known about the archaeological remains of Babylon, but Persian sites had been visited. For example, in 1764 Carsten Niebuhr had passed through Persepolis on his return to Europe from the Arabia Felix expedition.

Thorvaldsen's Babylonians are most probably modelled on Niebuhr's Persians (Figure 63). Åkerblad, who knew all the available literature, advised Thorvaldsen on relevant passages from classical literature as well as on any published images of sculpture, vases, gems or other depictions that could serve as inspiration or model. Åkerblad could also help with the Greek elements in the frieze. Edward Dodwell published a few drawings of the Parthenon and Theseion friezes in Rome in 1812, and this title is present in Thorvaldsen's library.²⁴ The composition with Greek

²² Peter Calmeyer: "Die Orientalen auf Thorvaldsens Alexanderfries," in *Achaemenid History. 5, The Roots of the European Tradition: Proceedings of the 1987 Groningen Achaemenid History Workshop*, ed., H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg and J. W. Drijvers (Leiden: Nederlands Inst. voor het Nabije Oosten, 1990), 94.

²³ JDÅ to Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome, in *Albany*, 131.

²⁴ Edward Dodwell, *Alcuni bassirilievi della Grecia descritti e pubblicati in otto tavole...* (Rome, 1812).

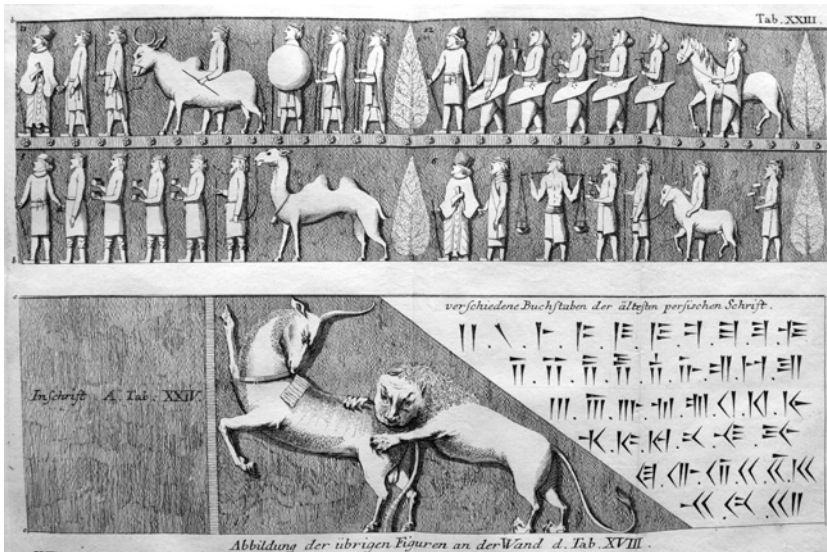


Figure 63. An image from Carsten Niebuhr's travelogue depicting friezes from Persepolis. Niebuhr was not only a good draughtsman but also extremely careful when he copied writing of any type. His copies of hieroglyphs and cuneiform were useful in the decipherment of both scripts. Niebuhr, *Reisebeschreibung nach Arabien*, 2: pl. 23. Photo author.

soldiers and horses in procession is clearly inspired by the Parthenon sculptures.

Åkerblad had criticized Cicognara's book on the history of Italian sculpture for being too fawning towards Canova. Now he had also had personal experience of following the work of other sculptors, which made him more appreciative of their different specialities. He underlined that Canova did have competition and that Cicognara had done wrong in ignoring other artists:

I would like our author to see the bas-reliefs that Thorvaldsen and Finelli have made in the Imperial Palace at Monte Cavallo, and if his friendship does not blind him to the point of depriving him of the use of his eyes, I am certain that he would confess that other sculptors are also capable, and in the matter of composition of bas-reliefs are superior to him [Canova].²⁵

Åkerblad had a grain of self-interest when promoting Thorvaldsen, but the composition was successful and the frieze met with great acclaim, earning

²⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 19 September 1812, KVHAA.



Figure 64. Marble copy of the Alexander frieze. Thorvaldsens Museum.

Thorvaldsen the epithet ‘the patriarch of bas-reliefs.’ There are innumerable comments by residents and travellers in praise of the frieze; Caroline von Humboldt, for one, was enthusiastic.²⁶ Napoleon was informed about the results and ordered a marble version of the frieze to adorn Paris’ *Temple de la Gloire de la Grande Armée*. This was never accomplished and the *Temple* is today known as the Madeleine church.

There was a discussion as to whether the frieze was a surreptitious critique of Napoleon and the French conquests. Even if Napoleon’s proposed entry into Rome had been a peaceful operation, the French troops—like Alexander’s forces—had already looted the city. The elephant is loaded with booty and a prisoner is walking beside it. In the last scene of the frieze, Thorvaldsen himself, standing under the palm tree, observes the troops leaving (Figure 64). The Swedish poet Atterbom (more about him below) visited Rome in 1818 and read the frieze as a statement against Napoleon.²⁷

This was a common interpretation after the fall of the emperor but one which has been rejected later by most art historians.²⁸ Thorvaldsen talked little about politics and the testimonies we have of his opinions are mostly second-hand. Atterbom, who admired him, wanted the frieze to be critical. The fact that Thorvaldsen and many other artists had worked for the French regime was not altogether easy to deal with for the foreigners who came to Rome after the city was liberated from the French.

²⁶ See e.g. Jürgen Wittstock, “Geschichte der deutschen und skandinavischen Thorvaldsen-Rezeption bis zur Jahresmitte 1819,” (PhD diss., Univ. of Hamburg, 1975).

²⁷ Atterbom’s essay from Rome was first published in 1820 and then reprinted several times. Per Daniel Amadeus Atterbom, *Minnen från Tyskland och Italien*, 2 vols. (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2002), 1:290f.

²⁸ Calmeyer, *Orientalen auf Thorvaldsens Alexanderfries*, 104ff.

Åkerblad had lived through both French occupations of Rome. He knew what moral choices the decades of revolution and war had confronted everyone with, at least everyone who had needed to work and make a living during the occupations. Åkerblad rather mocked those turncoats who changed their opinions and flattered the new overlords immediately after the fall of Napoleon. He wrote to Ciampi about his old antagonist Luigi Bossi, the defender of the Pelasgic runes. Bossi had sworn an oath of allegiance to France already in 1798. In 1816 Åkerblad commented heatedly on his opportunism: "Please notice how well he has chosen the moment . . . to insult the French. Oh, what an infamous sort is that of the arse-lickers!"²⁹

If Italy and Rome were considered provincial and backward in scholarly contexts, this was not the case for the arts and especially not for sculpture. Sculpture was also the most direct link to classical art. Rome was still the main source of knowledge of classical sculpture and Greek sculpture was mainly known through Roman copies. Rome was also the place for the restoration of antiquities from all over the classical world. The city was an important marketplace and there was a strong presence of sculptors and restorers. Many of the names on Åkerblad's list of artists and artisans in Rome worked in this field. A few years after Thorvaldsen had finished the frieze in the Quirinale, he landed another prestigious commission, this time as a restorer.³⁰

In 1815 Åkerblad wrote to Ciampi about some exceptional sculptures that had recently arrived in Rome. He wanted Ciampi to come to Rome to meet the travellers who had brought the sculptures from Greece and see the marvel for himself:

I will introduce you to two distinguished travellers, one English and the other German recently returned from Greece where they spent five years. They belong to the party that excavated so productively on the island of Egina in the temple of Jupiter Panhellenius and in Arcadia in the temple of Apollo in Phigaleia. All the statues that stood in the Aëto, that is the

²⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 15 June 1816, KVHAA. The French were not convinced of Bossi's loyalty and he was once described as "Homme plein de talent, très dangereux, immoral, corrompible, meneur, autrichien." DBI, 13:325.

³⁰ Just Matthias Thiele, *Thorvaldsens Biographi. Efter den afdøde Kunstners Brevvexlinger, egenhændige Optegnelser og andre efterladte Papirer. Anden Deel: Thorvaldsen i Rom. 1805–1819* (Copenhagen, 1852), 292ff.

tympanum of the first temple, are now in Rome; really marvellous examples of ancient art.³¹

The Englishman was Charles Robert Cockerell (1788–1863), who would remain a close friend of Åkerblad during the years he stayed in Italy. Cockerell had dug at two important Greek sites, on the island of Aegina in the bay of Athens and at Bassae in the Peloponnese.³²

The Bavarian prince Ludwig bought the Aegina sculptures and was advised to have the fragments restored before exhibiting them in the museum he was commissioning, the *Glyptothek* in Munich. Rome was the obvious place, but whether antique sculpture should be restored or not had recently been put into question. In 1803 Lord Elgin asked Canova to restore the bas-reliefs he had taken from the Parthenon. Canova's answer is often referred to in the literature about the changed perceptions on restoration in these decades: "it would be sacrilege in him, or any man, to presume to touch them with a chisel."³³

It is all too easy to counterpoise the ideas of Canova and Thorvaldsen. The latter probably also accepted the commission to restore the Aegina sculptures because they were considered easier to copy than the Parthenon frieze and metopes. Though Canova did not do any restoration work himself he continued to advise his colleagues on the reintegration of sculptures.³⁴

Åkerblad was right when he called the Aegina sculptures "marvellous examples of ancient art." They were the first known examples of what is now called Late Archaic sculpture, and are now dated to around the year 500 BCE. It was soon recognized that this style was the immediate predecessor of 'high' classical sculpture. Åkerblad was aware of their importance but suspected that his fellow Italian scholars would be less interested and recommended Ciampi to: "come and see for yourself [and write about them]; you would certainly be the first to inform the learned of Italy, our antiquarians do not bother with these bagatelles."³⁵

If Italian interest was low, foreigners flocked to see the sculptures in Thorvaldsen's studio. One such visitor was the Duchess of Devonshire

³¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 30 September 1815, KVHAA. The temple is now known to have been dedicated to the cult of Aphaia.

³² David Watkin, *The Life and Work of C. R. Cockerell* (London: Zwemmer, 1974).

³³ [William Robert Hamilton], *Memorandum on the Earl of Elgin's Pursuits in Greece* (London, 1811), 40.

³⁴ Orietta Rossi Pinelli, "Il frontone di Aegina e la cultura del restauro dell'antico a Roma intorno al 1816," in Kragelund, *Thorvaldsen: l'ambiente*.

³⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 30 September 1815, KVHAA.

who would soon become an important patron of Åkerblad's: "We went to see some fragments of statues dug out of the ground in Egina by Mr Cockereil & some persons employ'd by the King of Bavaria . . . these statues are evidently between the Egyptian & the fine Grecian era."³⁶ The Duchess' comment was typical. The idea that Egyptian art had influenced Greek art was widespread and the Aegina sculptures were seen as an example of an intermediate stage in this development. They became the centrepieces in the new Munich museum building that was also clearly influenced by the 'Egyptian style.'

Åkerblad was one of the first observers to state unequivocally that both sculpture and architecture in Greece had been painted. The debate on whether and how classical sculpture and architecture was painted is an area in which actual observation of the artefacts played an important role. The idea that classical sculpture was unpainted has a long history. Most famous was Winckelmann's championing of a white Greek ideal, an association that still holds strong. But Winckelmann had not been to Greece, and neither had many other scholars who wrote about art and sculpture. The late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century saw major changes in ideas about classical colours and it would take some time before the new observations were accepted.

In his 1811 treatise, Åkerblad wrote how high-classical buildings were painted and not only in solid colours. During his visit to Athens in 1797 he had climbed up to investigate both the Theseion—Fauvel had erected scaffolding to mould plaster copies of the sculptures—and the cornice of the Propylaea on the Acropolis. He easily established that both architecture and sculpture had been painted. The Propylaea was decorated with painted foliage. He also emphasized that this custom was not restricted to classical Athens and explained that two small statues in his collection, probably from Hellenistic times, had a residue of paint on them. Åkerblad's observation was one of the first to reach print. In the following decade more travellers would concur with his observations. He correctly predicted that once more excavations were undertaken in this "still virgin terrain," more proof of the practice of painting buildings and sculpture would be discovered.³⁷

³⁶ Elizabeth Hervey, Rome 4 November 1815, MS diary, Dormer archives.

³⁷ Åkerblad, *Due laminette di bronzo*, 9f.; Dodwell, *Alcuni bassirilievi*, vi. Dodwell also refers to Åkerblad's conclusion published the year before.



Figure 65. The Aegina Aphaia temple's west pediment from Adolf Furtwängler, *Aegina: Heiligtum der Aphaia*, 2 vols. (Munich: Franz, 1906), 2: pl. 104, UUL.

Today we know that the Aegina sculptures were painted in bright colours. They are often used as a prominent example in the discussion about the colouring of early classical Greek sculpture. The image is from Adolf Furtwängler's publication on the first extensive excavations of the Aegina site which started in 1904 (Figure 65). The latest reconstructions have changed the colours but the image gives an idea of the rich decoration.

When surveying the bibliography on Greek painted sculpture, it is evident that travellers who had been to Greece were responsible for bringing the colour issue to the fore of the debate.³⁸ Åkerblad had also been to Egypt and seen polychromic Egyptian artefacts. The myth of Greek 'whiteness' is another example of how the uniqueness of the Greeks in relation to their eastern neighbours was upheld. The relationship between Egyptian and Greek art when it comes to colours is now undisputed. By the end of the 1820s the white Greek art prejudice had been refuted for those willing to listen, but this realisation had little influence on how Greek art was exhibited in museums. The white myth lived on and only recently has the long work of art historians like Vinzenz Brinkmann led to major exhibitions centred on colour with mock-ups of painted Greek sculptures. Brinkmann underlines that Greek sculpture cannot be understood without its colours, and he proposes that the change from 'white' to 'coloured' art constitutes an 'Iconic turn' in art history not dissimilar to the 'Linguistic turn' in history.³⁹

³⁸ Patrik Reuterswärd, *Studien zur Polychromie der Plastik: Griechenland und Rom: Untersuchungen über die Farbwirkung der Marmor- und Bronzeskulpturen* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1960), 9ff.

³⁹ Vinzenz Brinkmann, *Die Polychromie der archaischen und frühklassischen Skulptur* (Munich: Biering & Brinkmann, 2003).

As Åkerblad predicted, when systematic excavations started in Greece a great deal of sculpture was found; the sculptures of Aegina were placed in a Greek chronological perspective, and the connection to Egypt was rejected. The ideas on Egyptian heritage were downplayed in the quest to establish Greek uniqueness. Only much later would the debate on Egyptian influence on Greece attract renewed interest. Today there is an expanding body of research documenting Egyptian influences on Greek art.⁴⁰

It is tenuous to claim that Åkerblad and some of his antiquarian friends had a view of Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean that foresaw the late-twentieth century's idea of eastern importance and influence. But, as in the case of the curse tablets, it is obvious that they looked on both material remains and literary evidence from a different perspective in comparison to that of the late-nineteenth century. The question was not yet framed in our guise, but their view was without doubt different from that of many later scholars.

Åkerblad's activities were not restricted to ancient Greek culture and language; he also took an increased interest in questions around the language spoken in Greece, Modern Greek as it is called today. The same Mario Pieri who had commented on Åkerblad's interest in women remarked that Åkerblad spoke better Greek than he did himself. Pieri was born in Corfu where the predominant languages were Greek and Italian.⁴¹ Åkerblad's knowledge of spoken Greek was remarkable; many Ancient Greek scholars did not even bother to try to learn it. Åkerblad's friend and Greek librarian at the Vatican library, Girolamo Amati, refused to speak it.⁴²

Åkerblad was extremely knowledgeable about what was happening in the field of Greek learning and also harboured sympathy for the Greek nationalist movement: "You know how much I love that interesting nation, which for some time has been rousing itself from its old torpor."⁴³ He knew many of the Greek scholars active in France and Italy and also promoted his Greek friends in other cities. An example:

⁴⁰ For a short introduction see: Tanner, *Finding Egyptian in Greek*.

⁴¹ Pieri, *Vita di Mario Pieri*, 1:240.

⁴² JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 October 1816, KVHAA. Amati is one of the persons most often mentioned in the correspondence with Ciampi; he used to visit Åkerblad every Sunday morning. DBI; Oriad Tizzoma, "Girolamo Amati," *Rubiconia Accademia dei Filopatrìdi. Quaderno* 9 (1969): 16–27.

⁴³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 18 May 1816, KVHAA.

Mustoxidi is coming to Rome. I have had news from Teseo from Marseille where he established himself as a merchant. Here we only have one Greek, a Pizzamano from Kefalonia, an architect and painter. A certain Balsamachi that I came to know in Florence is a scholar in Paris and I have been told that the institute has received him as correspondent, which must be *pour l'amour du grec*, because he is more than mediocre.⁴⁴

Another Greek friend was Panagiotēs Kodrikas: “an old friend of mine from Constantinople and Paris, he is certainly one of the most elegant writers of his nation,” with whom Åkerblad still corresponded in 1816.⁴⁵ Today the most famous of Åkerblad’s Greek friends was a sworn enemy of Kodrikas, the scholar and ‘patriot’ Adamantios Korais.⁴⁶ Korais was born in Smyrna and arrived in Paris in 1788. Åkerblad probably met him through Vilhoisson in Paris in 1789.

Åkerblad followed the intense debate on the Greek language with interest. He was well aware of the difficulties of creating a ‘new’ written language out of the dialects spoken and written by different groups and social classes. Korais advocated a purging of spoken Greek and a partial return to Ancient Greek. He proposed a reformed language, a New Greek, called *Katharevousa*. Korais published Greek authors and dictionaries, grammars etc., in his quest for language reform.

Åkerblad was involved in several discussions about New Greek. An exchange of letters with Courier is typical. Courier, like Amati, had little patience with New Greek, which he thought was a corruption of the great language of the Ancients. Courier called Korais’ language *mixtobarbare* and mocked his Isocrates edition for its preface in New Greek: “Oh doctor Corai! a gothic front for a Greek building! the doorway of Notre-Dame at the temple of Minerva!”⁴⁷ Åkerblad answered immediately and lauded Korais’ edition for exactly the same qualities Courier had criticized.⁴⁸ It

⁴⁴ Ibid. Andreas Moustoxydes (1785–1860); Demetrius Valsamachi (1789–1870).

⁴⁵ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 October 1816, KVHAA.

⁴⁶ Paschalis M. Kitromilides, ed., *Adamantios Korais and the European Enlightenment* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010), esp. Peter Mackridge, “Korais and the Greek Language Question,” 127–49.

⁴⁷ Courier to JDÅ, 2 November 1808, Livorno, in *Courier*, 2:58. A couple of weeks earlier Courier wrote a very flattering letter to Korais commending his Isocrates edition and underlining the need for a good dictionary of the new Greek language, the same he called *mixtobarbare* in his correspondence with Åkerblad. This letter is not printed in *Courier*. Courier to Korais, 18 October 1808, Livorno, in Adamantios Korais, *Lettres inédites de Coray à Chardon de La Rochette (1790–1796), suivies d’un recueil de ses lettres françaises à divers savants*..., ed. Émile Egger (Paris, 1877), 339.

⁴⁸ JDÅ to Courier, 16 November 1808, Florence, in *Courier*, 2:61.

was the right strategy to write the preface in New Greek so that the Greeks themselves could read it. Åkerblad justly remarked that when Greek texts were published in France they had French forewords. Åkerblad agreed with Korais that the only way to spread the new language was to write and print in it to get people to read it, otherwise it would be stillborn. Korais' New Greek was a radical break from the spoken language and Åkerblad underlined that Korais himself disliked the mix of the spoken language and ancient words, a mixture Korais called *macaronique*. Kodrikas was an enemy of Korais' style but Åkerblad pointed out inconsistencies in Kodrikas' own professed version of Greek.⁴⁹

In other contexts Åkerblad defended spoken Greek and supported the Greeks in their decisions about their own language. He mocked presumptuous European professors who wanted to teach the Greeks how to pronounce their own language.⁵⁰ Åkerblad read all New Greek books he could lay his hands on and thought that the new literature was undervalued; he asked his friends to procure him the latest news on the nascent Greek literature.

Katharevousa was eventually declared the official language of the Greek republic while the spoken language remained the so-called Dimotiki. It created a situation of diglossia and knowledge of Katharevousa became a requirement for entry to government service. The differences between spoken and written language made the creation of a modern literary tradition complicated and the Greek language question was only formally resolved in 1976 when Dimotiki was declared the sole official language.

Åkerblad knew more than most scholars about how languages change over time. He took no moral stance in condemning later varieties of languages and did not talk about decadence. His opinion was that if one had to imitate older varieties of a language, it had to be done "cum grano salis" and without inflicting violence on the existing language.⁵¹

Guide and Broker of Antiquities

The community of scholars in Rome catered to the needs of both Italian and foreign visitors. The most common task was to act as a *cicerone* to the

⁴⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 October 1816, KVHAA.

⁵⁰ Åkerblad, *Lamina piombo*, 35.

⁵¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 28 October 1816, KVHAA.

monuments of Rome. The foreign scholars knew languages; the Italians, in general, only knew French and even so knowledge of the spoken language was often scarce. Åkerblad for one exhorted Ciampi to practice his spoken French before leaving for abroad. There was competition among the guides. Åkerblad lamented that an Italian, whom Ciampi had recommended to him, had chosen another guide: "He only showed up once at my place and it does not seem that he needed my assistance to visit the curiosities of Rome as he took as his *cicerone* our Guattani, with the handsome pay of a zecchino a day."⁵² As Åkerblad knew English well, he catered for quite a few British visitors when they began to travel to Italy after the French surrender. An acquaintance in Florence sent him foreigners to be guided, "above all Americans."⁵³

It was a common practice that each antiquary dealt with visitors from his nation. Zoëga had, for instance, guided Danes in Rome. Åkerblad had frequent contacts with Swedish travellers—whatever the rumours—and he also used them to convey his mail. When the Swedish minister in Vienna visited Rome, Åkerblad was his "povero *cicerone*."⁵⁴ Åkerblad also managed to retain the friendship of many of the international nobles who alighted in the city.

It was a small step from guiding and teaching to supplying or selling antiquities. Åkerblad had little money and his own collections were reduced to nothing when he died, but he did take part in buying for third parties. He for instance bought a high-quality incised gem for Friederike Brun, who sent it to her brother Friedrich Münter in Copenhagen.⁵⁵

The main argument against Åkerblad's independent involvement in the business was his lack of capital. To buy and sell without explicit commissions from a buyer would have required substantial capital or a good creditworthiness; Åkerblad had neither. So, instead of buying and selling antiquities, he advised and authenticated objects.

In 1812 Åkerblad and Filippo Aurelio Visconti were engaged to value the collection of Stefano Borgia in Velletri south of Rome. Åkerblad was considered an authority on certain types of objects and their market value. The fate of Borgia's collections was discussed in many places, including

⁵² JDÅ to Ciampi, 2 February 1815, KVHAA; Daniela Gallo, "Per una storia degli antiquari romani nel '700," *MEFRIM. Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Italie et Méditerranée* 111, no. 2 (1999): 827–45. French translation in Boutier, *Naples, Rome, Florence*.

⁵³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 6 July 1816, KVHAA.

⁵⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 6 May 1813, KVHAA; JDÅ to Löwenhielm, 15 August 1817, Rome, Ep L 24, KB.

⁵⁵ Münter to Böttiger, 15 August 1809, Copenhagen, in *Münter*, 5:75.

Copenhagen. Münter commented laconically on French acquisitiveness: "Now it will probably all end up in the big treasure chamber by the Seine."⁵⁶ Visconti and Åkerblad spent several weeks in Velletri and communicated the results to their Roman friends.⁵⁷ Åkerblad also accepted larger commissions when he thought that he could furnish the right objects. A Polish friend wanted antiquities delivered from Rome but Åkerblad found the list dangerously imprecise:

Regarding the commissions of our Sierakowsky, they are very strange. An Isis of Basalt would come to cost a hundred or a hundred and fifty zecchini, a braccio ['arm' approximately 70 cm] tall. If he wants a modern work just let me know and he shall be served. . . . In conclusion, if the count makes an exact list of what he wants with the price for every item, I will serve him more than happily, but I never assume the task of such vague commissions as his.⁵⁸

When the British began to arrive, they brought new money and a pent-up lust for acquisitions. There was a whole generation of wealthy Britons who had never visited Italy—it had been off limits since the start of the wars in the 1790s. Åkerblad was peripherally involved in the trade but not to the extent of some of his Italian colleagues. He joked with Ciampi about how the Italian antiquaries had not been able to attract enough of the business of the newly arrived visitors: "the English milordi that this time have neglected them inhumanely, all walking around with their servants carrying vases under their arms, leaving the Uggeri, Visconti, Guattani and all that bunch of antiquarians with dry mouths." Prices of all commodities rose steeply with the influx of foreign travellers.⁵⁹

There were also important foreign traders in Rome. One of them was Åkerblad's friend James Millingen. Millingen supplied both private collections and institutions, most famously the British Museum. Like everything else the antiquities market was in turmoil during the late Napoleonic years and he had to be careful not to buy too much: "the moment is such that I believe it more prudent to keep one's money than to convert it into antiquities. Never has there been such a critical epoch, the fate of the

⁵⁶ Münter to Böttiger, 15 August 1809, Copenhagen, in *Münter*, 5:75; Buzi, *Catalogo dei manoscritti copti borgiani*, 69–75.

⁵⁷ JDÅ to Courier, 22 December 1812, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:356; JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 September 1812, KVHAA; Cancellieri to Millin, 30 July, 19 August 1812, Rome, MS FR 24680, BNF.

⁵⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 14 August 1817, Forteg.

⁵⁹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 2 February 1815, 21 December 1815, KVHAA.

entire world is to be decided.”⁶⁰ Millingen expressed more worries than Åkerblad about world events and wrote as much to a common friend in Florence: “He [Åkerblad] is, as usual, indifferent to everything that surrounds him; on the other hand he loves himself infinitely, I do not know whether a similar character should be envied or despised.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ James Millingen to Stolberg, 7 August 1813, Rome, in *Albany*, 164.

⁶¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

FRENCH DEFEAT

To what extent the population resisted the French during the occupations in Italy is sometimes debated. Recent authors such as Broers maintain that the resistance has been downplayed in earlier historiography. While this might be the case, the discussion is sometimes tinged by a preference for interpreting any behaviour that may be constructed as a challenge to the French, as resistance. Opposing an occupier is generally regarded as a worthy cause.¹ What is clear is that in Italy there was nothing like the violent Spanish resistance to the French occupation; the term 'guerrilla' as it is meant today was first used during the military operations against the Napoleonic forces in Spain. Spanish resistance has taken on an almost mythical importance in Spanish nationalism. However, a common theory is that the French occupations were important for the creation of an Italian national consciousness.

During the French occupations in Italy most resistance was non-violent, but there was also a great deal of pragmatism on behalf of the local populations. There were many examples of co-operation with the occupying forces. In Rome not everyone was unhappy with the diminished powers of the clergy, and many happily celebrated the French emperor and his endeavours. To what extent this was pure political opportunism or heartfelt must be valued from case to case.

One episode that illustrates various attitudes towards the new overlords is the celebration of the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte's first legitimate son, the *Re di Roma*. As Rome held a position of great symbolic importance in the empire, the child was given the title King of Rome. The news reached Rome on 24 March 1810, four days after the birth. The French governors immediately initiated great celebrations and forced the clergy to recite special prayers in honour of the future emperor. Many priests had already refused to participate in the prayers during the pregnancy and the

¹ Michael Broers maintains in his review of Davis' *Naples and Napoleon*, that Davis underestimates the resistance on the part of the Neapolitans to French rule, *English Historical Review* 123 (2008): 226–28. Broers has developed this line of reasoning in his recent: *Napoleon's Other War: Bandits, Rebels and Their Pursuers in the Age of Revolutions* (Witney: Lang, 2010).

Roman chief of police Jacques de Norvins' reports were full of complaints about disobedient churchmen. But many Italians did participate in the celebrations and among them was Ciampi. He informed Åkerblad that he was celebrating the newborn king and Åkerblad wanted to read his efforts: "I hope you will favour me with your tri-lingual epigram for the newborn King of Rome."² There was an outbreak of celebratory publications. Madelin sarcastically summed up the literary value of the combined Italo-French tributes: "What debauchery! The French composed mediocre Italian prose, the Italians detestable French poetry."³

Many priests had already declined to swear an oath to Napoleon and France. That they refused to celebrate the little king is understandable. Recognizing the *Re di Roma* implied the negation of papal power and the projection of French domination into the next generation. Especially recalcitrant churchmen were exiled, for instance to Corsica. Norvins repeatedly demanded that Napoleon should visit Rome to effect a change in the people's feelings: "The arrival of the Emperor in Rome would fix the destiny of this country and would forever destroy the memories of the Pope and the means of the opposition that the priests secretly employ so well to delay or hinder the great political conversion of the Roman States."⁴

Napoleon never visited Rome, and to what extent such a visit would actually have changed anything is doubtful. The policy of sending noncompliant churchmen and citizens into exile was continued. In the summer of 1812 a friend of Åkerblad's, cardinal Gian Domenico Testa (1747–1832), was imprisoned in the Castel Sant'Angelo. Testa was a polymath and occupied himself with natural sciences, theology and Egyptian studies, to name but a few of his interests. He taught at the Collegio Romano and had publicly protested against the French and refused to take the oath. Testa had visited Åkerblad just before he was imprisoned; the latter did his best to convince the cardinal to yield to French demands:

My poor friend cardinal Testa is since Thursday night at the Castel Sant'Angelo. The night before he came to me, and, even if you do not like it I tried as far as possible to make him conform to what his well-being, and that of his family, and thousands of other considerations require, but it was

² JDÅ to Ciampi, 16 April 1811, Forteg.

³ Madelin, *Rome de Napoléon*, 426.

⁴ Norvins 1 April 1810, cited in Raffaele de Cesare, *I Romani e la nascita del re di Roma* (Rome: Ed. di Storia e Letteratura, 1996), 187.

all in vain. I have not yet received permission to visit him, but I hope to obtain an entry pass to the castle.⁵

Whether or not Åkerblad managed to visit him in prison, he did not succeed in convincing the cardinal to succumb to French orders and Testa was deported to Corsica. Åkerblad was worried that the recipient of the letter, the Countess d'Albany, would think badly of his attempt to make Testa surrender; she had a strong antipathy towards the French rulers.

Soon France's military disasters in Russia became known in Rome and the *Re di Roma* came to be regarded as another sign of Napoleonic megalomania. In 1812 the carcass of a decapitated dog dressed in a French uniform was found hanging on a Roman wall with a note: "The Muscovite will cut off emperor Bonaparte's head."⁶ Someone in Rome was confident that the French would get their comeuppance in Russia.

The statue *Pasquino*, just off piazza Navona in central Rome, is used for satirical displays against the power holders of the day, a tradition dating from the early sixteenth century. In 1813 *Pasquino* dialogued with his like-wise talking statue colleague *Marforio* on the little king and his family:

MARFORIO	Dimmi, Pasquino, ma dimmi il vero Dell'armata francese che ne fu?	Tell me Pasquino, tell me the truth What happened to the French army?
PASQUINO	Divenne uno zero.	It was nullified.
MARFORIO	Del picciol re che ne faremo?	What will we do with the little king?
PASQUINO	Alli bastardi lo manderemo.	We'll send him to the dogs.
MARFORIO	E della madre sua che ne sarà?	And what will happen to his mother?
PASQUINO	Piena di corna al padre tornerà.	Full of horns [cuckolded] she will return to her father.
MARFORIO	E di Napoleone, il forte, l'eterno?	And of Napoleon, the strong, the eternal?
PASQUINO	Se il diavolo lo vorrà, andrà all'Inferno. ⁷	If the devil wants him, he will go to hell.

⁵ JDÅ to Stolberg, 9 June 1812, Rome, in *Albany*, 133; Francesco Fabi Montani, "Elogio storico di Monsignor Domenico Testa," in *Continuazione delle memorie di religione di morale e di Letteratura*, t. 18 (Rome, 1844), 404ff.

⁶ Madelin, *Rome de Napoléon*, 584.

⁷ de Cesare, *Re di Roma*, 200.

Rumours that Napoleon had met his death in Russia were circulating, and other voices stated that the earthquake in 1812 was a punishment for the subservience of the Roman population. When news of France's defeat in Russia reached Rome after Christmas in 1812, it was obvious that French European domination was on the wane. The new French conscriptions designed to replenish the army with Italian soldiers often met with resistance and the concordat signed in Fontainebleau by the pope and Napoleon on 25 January 1813 was received with scepticism in Rome. The French governors of Rome tried to uphold a gay façade while news from the continent trickled in. Meanwhile, the Italian countryside was becoming unruly and brigandage was increasing.

By 19 January 1814 Rome was in Neapolitan hands. The king of Naples, Joachim Murat, had turned on his brother-in-law Napoleon in 1813 and joined the Austrians and the British against France. He invaded Rome in a vain attempt to save his own kingdom. The fall of the French in Italy was a fairly peaceful takeover. Åkerblad asked Ciampi about some rumours he had heard about the Tuscan situation: "A few travellers have written that in Pisa, and also Pistoia I believe, there have been some minor disturbances, but I hope that everything now has calmed down and is peaceful. Livorno must be full of joy and of content, after so many inauspicious years for its commerce."⁸ Livorno's commerce had suffered greatly during French rule, particularly from the constant British attacks on French Mediterranean shipping.

In Rome the feeling was one of interregnum; the pope had not yet returned and Åkerblad hoped for a good carnival under the new Neapolitan governors: "In short, there are everywhere conditions for a happy carnival this year, and also here, in spite of the vicinity of our old masters that still occupy the castle."⁹ The takeover was not complete. While the high civil French officials had left the city by 24 January the French general and governor of Rome, Alexandre de Miollis, had barricaded himself with a garrison of almost 2000 men in the Castel Sant'Angelo. Miollis finally left on 10 March once his troops had been assured safe passage.

During the few months of interregnum before the pope's return, Rome was nominally governed from Naples. In the spring of 1814 Åkerblad nurtured plans to leave Rome for Naples. He had contacts with Neapolitan scholars and cultural exchange between the cities was frequent. In March

⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 12 February 1814, KVHAA.

⁹ Ibid.

1814 Millin wrote about Åkerblad's ambitions: "As Akerblad so desired to be made head of the queen's museum in Naples, it seems to me that he has a good occasion to apply. I will write him in a few days."¹⁰ Millin had travelled all over southern Italy in 1812–13 and had become acquainted with both scholars and rulers. He had already spoken about Åkerblad to the Neapolitan queen. The museum would later become known as the *Museo Archeologico*. At the time it already had an exceptional collection of Roman artefacts that was continuously being enlarged by new finds from the Naples area. The queen of Naples, Napoleon's sister Caroline Murat, and her husband Joachim Murat, pursued an active cultural policy from the time they became monarchs of Naples in 1808.¹¹

The queen knew about Åkerblad; he had already given her an idea. During excavations in Herculaneum in the 1750s the *Villa dei Papiri* was found. Almost 1,800 papyrus rolls had been recovered. Classical scholars were wondering what they contained. The papyri were partly carbonised and extremely fragile. They needed to be rolled out with the utmost care to avoid complete destruction. But the publications from Herculaneum and Pompeii were managed by the government and reduced to a trickle. Åkerblad thought that publication was far too slow and asked Millin to propose to the queen that the government should change its way of publishing the rolls:

all the rolled out papyrus will be published, and soon at that, without translations, notes and commentaries. You owe this work to Millin, but it was your servant that came up with the idea and told Millin who spoke to the Queen about it. This angers the Neapolitans who have speculated on these papyri, the publication in their way would take at least three or four centuries. It is a capital that has been taken away from them.¹²

A decision was taken to increase the rhythm of publication. But Åkerblad probably did not even get the opportunity to apply for the position of director of the museum, nor were any papyri published during these years. Before the end of the following year the situation in Naples changed again. Caroline Murat's husband would once again turn against his allies. At the Vienna congress the Bourbon monarchy was re-established in Naples and Joachim Murat lost his throne. Murat realized that his support

¹⁰ Millin to Cancellieri, 11 March 1814, Paris, fol. 235, Add MS 22,891, BL.

¹¹ M. Torrini, "Lo stato e le scienze," in *Giachino Murat: Protagonisti nella storia di Napoli*, ed. Alfonso Scirocco (Naples: Elio de Rosa, 1994), 44–49.

¹² JDÅ to Courier, 22 December 1812, Rome, in *Courier*, 2:356.

of the Austrians and the British would not save him. He turned his back on them and became Napoleon's ally during the 'hundred days.' In October 1815 he made a bizarre attempt to recapture the lost kingdom. He was summarily shot in Calabria south of Naples. The quick changes in politics were disconcerting. Åkerblad could once more see the possibility of a decent position evaporating in the turmoil of the wars.

Pope Pius VII returned to Rome on 24 of May 1814 and the Papal States were largely reinstated during the Vienna congress. The pope and the clergy were once again in charge of Rome. The image of Restoration Rome is divided; there was an oppressive clergy that re-established the former hierarchy and religious oppression, yet this was balanced by the moderation of cardinal Ercole Consalvi, Secretary of State, and other less zealous clerics.¹³ But the immediate consequences for the learned community in Rome were drastic. Åkerblad discussed the work of one of his learned colleagues and sceptically depicted the situation of learning in Rome, not only in his own disciplines: "I am sure that [scholarly] results will find fortune in this capital [Naples], and I hope that literary efforts will have better success there than in Rome where scholar and poor man are synonyms. ... Our best mineralogist is leaving for Naples, and the best chemist might do the same &c. &c."¹⁴

No one was sure what the Roman learned could expect from the new papal government, but a few eminent scholars had already decided to leave Rome. They had accepted positions in other Italian states, fearing worsened conditions and new restrictions on research and teaching in Rome. Åkerblad's premonitions were not positive, and he continued his letter sardonically:

But praised be the heavens, our theologians remain and in this moment they preach us beautiful sermons in all the piazzas. It is truly a pleasure to find oneself in Rome in such an edifying moment. It does displease me somewhat to see the arena of the Colosseum covered again after that those damned French had it almost entirely dug up ... like this the Via Crucis is more accessible.

¹³ Consalvi's 'reign' is debated but usually positively summed up in recent historiography as a period of reform of the Papal States, see e.g.: Roberto Regoli, *Ercole Consalvi: Le scelte per la chiesa* (Rome: Ed. Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, 2006); John Martin Robinson, *Cardinal Consalvi: 1757–1824* (London: Bodley Head, 1987).

¹⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 August 1814, KVHAA.



Figure 66. The Colosseum after the French excavations in 1813. The caption underlines the fact that it was filled in again: “Interno del Colosseo scavato nel 1813, e ricoperto nel 1814.” Luigi Rossini, *Frontispesio delle Antichità Romane, diviso in cento tavole...* (Rome, 1819–23), pl. 81, UUL.

The heated polemic about the Colosseum during the French-sponsored archaeological investigations had now come to an end. The arena was filled in again and a large cross was placed in the middle, a telling metaphor for Åkerblad's fear that the Church would limit research into the Roman past (Figure 66). Would the church try to re-establish a predominately Christian antiquity?

But there was also jubilation in Rome's foreign community at the final defeat of the French. Many foreign residents were from nations either conquered by the French or opposed to the imperial regime. The only other permanent Swedish Roman resident Åkerblad befriended, the sculptor Johan Niklas Byström (1783–1848), attended a victor's party in the Villa Borghese celebrating the fall of Paris:

To celebrate the capture of Paris the foreign community decided to hold a dinner, which took place the 21 April in the Casino in Villa Borghese—the most brilliant party I have ever attended and certainly the only one of its kind. We were 135 in number; the majority were artists, 6 to 8 English

officers, the Portuguese and Austrian chargé d'affaires and several chevaliers from various nations. Toasts were proposed as canons were fired, of course first for the pope, then for England, Russia, Prussia, Austria, Sweden and its crown prince etc.¹⁵

Auguring the end of the wars was obviously not the same as welcoming the return of an oppressive papal regime. Åkerblad was more sensitive to the changes in cultural policy and immediately noted what the return of the ecclesiastical power would entail. Byström was not dependent on Roman work as he lived on foreign commissions. However, the next year Byström wrote with less enthusiasm about the return of the clergy. The opulence of the new rule shone in everybody's eyes:

Here the priests are back in all their humility with princely luxury and shiny gold and silver, prohibiting all pleasures and public entertainments and tormenting the people with their boring monotonous church ceremonies, which they call religion. 2/3 of Rome wish the French were back, and that says a lot.¹⁶

The policies of the papal government were initially zealous; only with time would the new lords' actions become more moderate. Spoken theatre was prohibited by the *zelanti*. The French writer Stendhal quipped that the best actor in Rome was a wooden marionette.¹⁷

Issues of dogma were again important in Rome. Joseph Wolff, a German Jew who had converted to Catholicism and was studying in Rome, is an example of the policies ruling the seminaries. Åkerblad knew Wolff, a talented oriental language scholar who would make his fame as an adventurous missionary in the East.¹⁸ Åkerblad's previously exiled friend, cardinal Testa, was now papal secretary and introduced Wolff to the pope. Wolff studied assiduously at the seminary and his knowledge of Hebrew and other languages was greatly admired, even by the pope himself. He could, however, not accept the doctrine on papal infallibility, and declared this at a lecture. Testa tried to convince him to recant. This was an attempt not dissimilar to Åkerblad's own efforts to convince Testa to swear the

¹⁵ Byström to Fredrik Ridderstolpe, 11 July 1814, Rome, in Ahnfelt, *Svenska hofvets och aristokratiens lif*, 7:112–13. On Byström see Anette Landen, "Johan Niklas Byström, bostäder och byggnader i Rom 1810–1848," in *Humanist vid Medelhavet: Reflektioner och studier samlade med anledning av Svenska institutet i Roms 75-årsjubileum*, ed. Börje Magnusson (Stockholm: Rubicon, 2001); Thure Nyman, *Johan Niklas Byström: Ett konstnärsöde* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1939).

¹⁶ Byström to Ridderstolpe, 28 June 1815, Rome, in Ahnfelt, *Svenska hofvets*, 7:117.

¹⁷ Stendhal, 6 January 1817, *Voyages en Italie*, ed. V. del Litto (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), 27.

¹⁸ Wolff, *Travels and Adventures*, 1:96.

oath to the French in 1812. Testa did not succeed and one evening a tailor, a shoemaker and a hatter visited Wolff. He was placed under house arrest and given a new outfit in exchange for his seminary clothes and then accompanied by guards to the borders of the Papal States.¹⁹

During this first period of papal government no one was sure what would become of scholarly activities in the city. Åkerblad had proposed Ciampi for election to the Roman archaeological academy but informed him that the future of the academy was unknown: "You will certainly become a member of the Roman archaeological academy, if its existence will be confirmed by the Holy Father, as it was founded by the French there are doubts that it will be retained."²⁰

The last session of the archaeological academy was held only a few days before the French abandoned Rome in January 1814. After the arrival of the pope the academy was suppressed.²¹ Many of the other Roman academies were abolished or put on hold until moderate elements in the new administration gained influence and managed to obtain permission and funds to restart scholarly and scientific activities. It was over two years before the activities of the archaeological academy were resumed under the same president, the sculptor Canova. The name changed; from being the *Libera accademia* it became the *Pontificia accademia*.

Publication also virtually ceased, at least of the scholarly kind. Åkerblad underlined the lack of serious literary activities: "I do not think there is any literary news from this country. We are making great cardinals and great sonnets to *immortalize* them, but as far as I know nothing else is done."²²

Even if communications had often been difficult during the last decades of war and occupations, French rule had provided security for travellers and a functioning postal system. Millin, the editor of the *Magasin encyclopédique*, wrote to Cancellieri from Paris in May 1814. He was worried about the mail, which was so necessary for his publishing ventures. The post now had to pass through a number of countries instead of being conveyed by a domestic French system.²³ The breakdown of postal services

¹⁹ H. P. Palmer, *Joseph Wolff: His Romantic Life and Travels* (London: Heath Cranton, 1935), 63ff.

²⁰ JDÅ to Ciampi, 17 August 1814, KVHAA.

²¹ Donato, *Accademie romane*, 220; Pietrangeli, *Pontificia Accademia Romana*, 430.

²² JDÅ to Ciampi, 9 March 1816, KVHAA.

²³ Millin to Cancellieri, 23 May 1814, Paris, fol. 241, Add MS 22,891, BL.

was especially trying for the foreign community. James Millingen was concerned:

On the road to Naples there is a band of four hundred brigands, and what is distressing is that no measures are taken to stop such disorder. One feels today stunned by all that has happened, the changes are so great that one has difficulties to believe them. Besides, after such a storm, the calm can only be re-established little by little. A distressing thing is that the postal services have not been re-organized and one does not yet receive letters from either Paris or England.²⁴

Millingen wrote less than two weeks after the triumphal return of the pope through the Porta del Popolo and the tenor of his letter is one of disorientation. The Vienna congress negotiations began only in November 1814 and the Papal States were reinstated to almost their full previous territory in 1815. The fall of Napoleon also meant that there was at least theoretical freedom of movement. If one had the means and courage it was again possible to travel. In the same letter Millingen wrote about Åkerblad's economic troubles: "M. Akerblad talks about going to Paris, he is terribly short of funds and he does not receive any news from Sweden."

Åkerblad had not received any answers to his petitions from Sweden and had probably figured out that he would be able to earn his living more easily in Paris than in Rome. He was corresponding with Champollion and Sacy in Paris and knew from his attempt to publish his Egyptian geographical treatise that if he wanted to participate in orientalist work, this would be impossible in Rome.

The situation in Paris was likewise difficult. When Millin wrote to Cancellieri in Rome, he was explicit about his financial difficulties. Everyone knew that it was only a matter of time before the Napoleonic regime collapsed. Millin's social life became restricted and it was cold: "Paris is so big, and the cold is unbearable . . . and I make very few visits since circumstances have obliged me to give up my carriage."²⁵ At the end of March 1814, the same month Millin wrote, Russian tsar Alexander I headed the allied troops invading Paris. Napoleon abdicated on 6 April and the news travelled fast, as the Roman celebration dinner described by Byström testifies.

Cancellieri was equally forthright in his frequent letters to Millin in Paris. He described the situation laconically by means of a list. He started

²⁴ Millingen to Stolberg, 8 June 1814, Rome, in *Albany*, 199.

²⁵ Millin to Cancellieri, 11 March 1814, Paris, fol. 235, Add MS 22,891, BL.

with his own dire circumstances and then listed their common friends: "Nibby hankers after you to call him [to Paris], while nothing is found here. Armellini is going to Sicily. Re hopes that he will be re-integrated. Visconti is excluded from every employment. Guattani is slaving with his S. Luca."²⁶ Others had problems obtaining audiences with the pope while Åkerblad's situation was summed up in a terse phrase: "Åkerbland is selling all his books to survive."

²⁶ Cancellieri to Millin, 28 October 1815, Rome, fol. 317, MS FR 24680, BNF.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

DIGGING WITH THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

Foreigners began to arrive again and the British, in particular, helped to compensate for the loss of French patronage. Considering the many British travellers Åkerblad mentions, he did get some business. But these travellers were also of a fleeting kind and Åkerblad compared them to birds of passage: "Our many English, like a multitude of migrating birds, are now leaving one after another."¹ Like carrier pigeons the British also brought papers and journals with them and Åkerblad could again reconnect with news and debate from Britain: "The English . . . arrive at my place every day, and [they bring] quantities of literary journals from their country."²

Making a zecchino a day as a cicerone was not to be sniffed at, but occasional work was not enough for Åkerblad to survive on. More importantly, it left him insufficient free time to pursue his own interests. It was necessary for Åkerblad to acquire patrons who could provide durable support. Today it is difficult to understand the blend of sincere friendship and subservience that was a defining factor in relations between what were mostly noble employers and scholars, guides and artists in their service. The actual economic transactions between him and his patrons elude us. Money is easier to follow in the case of artists; they were selling something tangible and contracts often survive.

Åkerblad was a friend of some of the most illustrious Polish Roman residents. Prince Stanisław Poniatowski was the nephew of the last king of Poland before the partitions of the second half of the eighteenth century. From the 1780s he spent most of his life in Italy and was an important collector and patron of the arts. He lived lavishly and Åkerblad called him his *Lucullo*, after the Roman paragon of luxurious living *Lucullus*. Åkerblad advised Poniatowski when he bought objects for his extensive collection.³

¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 9 March 1816, KVHAA.

² JDÅ to Ciampi, 16 November 1816, KVHAA.

³ JDÅ to Löwenhielm, 15 August 1817, Rome, Ep L 24, K; Andrea Busiri Vici, *I Poniatowski e Roma* (Florence: Edam, 1971).

Åkerblad's acquaintance with Poles opened the door for Ciampi in Poland. Åkerblad proposed Ciampi for a professorship in Warsaw and after an intensive exchange of letters between Pisa, Rome and Warsaw, Ciampi left in September 1817. This is also when the correspondence between Åkerblad and Ciampi is interrupted; Åkerblad's last letter is a moving testimony to their long friendship. Ciampi is today mainly remembered for his role in introducing Polish culture and literature to Italy.⁴

In the same context that Åkerblad called Poniatowski his *Lucullos*, he referred to the Russian minister as his "respectable Plato."⁵ Andriy Yakovych Italinsky (1743–1827) had been the Russian representative in Constantinople in 1803–6 and 1812–16.⁶ He learned Arabic at the age of sixty and became an enthusiastic collector; he managed to acquire several important manuscripts during his time in Constantinople. Italinsky came to Rome in 1816 and Åkerblad dedicated his 1817 treatise to him. He mentions in the introduction that they had met before, possibly in Paris or the East. The publication was on a Phoenician inscription, befitting Italinsky's longstanding interest in oriental literature. Åkerblad also commented and worked with Italinsky's collection of inscriptions and manuscripts.⁷ Stendhal describes Italinsky as sympathetic and not at all pompous; he received his visitors in a large room adorned with a painting of an Ottoman sultan.⁸ As usual it is hard to say how money changed hands, but it is probable that Italinsky contributed to the printing costs of the treatise dedicated to him and also helped Åkerblad with his living costs. According to another source, Åkerblad had gained the confidence of Grand Duke Michael Pavlovich of Russia, probably through Italinsky's intermediation. Åkerblad

⁴ JDÅ to Ciampi, 25 September 1817, Forteg. The final year of correspondence between Åkerblad and Ciampi is to a large extent dedicated to Ciampi's Polish professorship. Vittore Branca, "Sebastiano Ciampi (1817–1822) nell'inedita biografia scritta da F. L. Polidori," in *Relazioni tra Padova e la Polonia: studi in onore dell'Università di Cracovia nel 6. centenario della sua fondazione* (Padova: Antenore, 1964); Branca, *Sebastiano Ciampi in Polonia e la Biblioteca Czartoryski (Boccaccio, Petrarca e Cino da Pistoia)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1970).

⁵ JDÅ to Löwenhielm, 15 August 1817, Rome, Ep L 24, KB.

⁶ See e.g. Shaw, *Selim III*, 350ff.; Kratchkovsky, *Among Arabic Manuscripts*, 171–72, 178ff.

⁷ Åkerblad, *Lettre sur une inscription phénicienne trouvée à Athènes* (Rome, 1817), 3. *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, no. 117. The stone is now in the Louvre. Åkerblad's annotations in Italinsky's papers: Marco Buonocore, *Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae. Codices 9734–9782 (Codices Amatiani)* (Vatican City: Bibl. Apostolica Vaticana, 1988), 66.

⁸ Stendhal, who met most notables during his visits to Rome, also mentions Åkerblad with appreciation. Stendhal, *Voyages en Italie*, 1254, 1256.

had promised to be the grand duke's guide in Rome, but died before the Russian party arrived in Rome in 1819.⁹

Yet Åkerblad's most important employer would turn out to be a British noblewoman. He first met her at Thorvaldsen's studio, inspecting the restoration of the sculptures from Aegina: "Mr Cockerell and a Swedish gentleman and others were there."¹⁰ The Swedish gentleman was Åkerblad and the diary writer Elizabeth Cavendish, Fifth Duchess of Devonshire (1759–1824). She married William Cavendish, Fifth Duke of Devonshire, in 1809, after the death of his first wife, Georgiana Spencer. The lives of Elizabeth and Georgiana were highly publicized already during their lifetimes.¹¹

The Duchess was well-educated, far more learned than the average noble visitor. Her diaries tell of almost daily visits to antiquities, artists, and salons. They show how her interest in Roman antiquities grew. Åkerblad and the Duchess quickly formed a close relationship. She visited virtually all the known sites, both in the city and in its surrounding areas, often with Åkerblad as a guide. Her interests were not limited to classical remains; she also investigated private collections and the churches in search of paintings and sculpture. She frequently visited contemporary artists and their studios. Åkerblad took her to the Vatican museum several times and alerted her to curiosities in the collections, sometimes in the presence of the pope.¹²

Negotiations for the return of art and antiquities taken to France during the wars began immediately after the fall of Napoleon. Already at the beginning of 1816 sculpture arrived at the Vatican museum from France. The Duchess was curious and went to see for herself. She even managed to have things unpacked for her to look at: "I told them I wanted to see what had been replaced, & something that was not & not unpack'd: they

⁹ *Biographie universelle, ancienne et moderne*, suppl. t. 56 (Paris, 1834), 118.

¹⁰ Elizabeth Hervey, Rome 4 November 1815, MS diary, Dormer archives. I refer to her by her maiden name Elizabeth Hervey in the notes.

¹¹ Vere Foster, ed., *The two Duchesses: Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire: Elizabeth Duchess of Devonshire: Family Correspondence Relating to...* (London, 1898); Dorothy Margaret Stuart, *Dearest Bess: The Life and Times of Lady Elizabeth Foster, afterwards Duchess of Devonshire, from her Unpublished Journals and Correspondence* (London: Methuen, 1955); Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana: Duchesses of Devonshire* (London: Harper Collins, 1998); Caroline Chapman in collaboration with Jane Dormer, *Elizabeth & Georgiana: The Duke of Devonshire and his two Duchesses* (London: Murray, 2002). The movie, *The Duchess* (2008) is based on Foreman's biography and directed by Saul Dibb.

¹² Elizabeth Hervey, 11 April 1816, 30 June 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

orderd'd whatever I wish'd to be shewn me... the magnificence of this museum is beyond all description."¹³

The Duchess kept her own *conversazioni* and her salon was well-known in Rome. Her diaries give glimpses of what was discussed. Åkerblad was often present both at her house and at other dinners and salons. He also recommended her to his Parisian friends.¹⁴ There was a lot of gossip about the Bonaparte family, some of whom had settled in Rome. The fate of Napoleon was discussed, both seriously and in an anecdotal form:

Fabroni told me some anecdotes of Bonaparte—one was that whilst he was playing at Billiards he went up to Talleyrand who was standing by, (it was just before the Russian War) & said to him "oh well Mons. Talleyrand, you sold the Republic to the Directory, you sold the Directory to me, to whom will you sell me?"¹⁵

The consequences of the end of French hegemony were frequently mulled over. It was evident that British and French aspirations in the East did not halt with the end of the wars. Even if Napoleon was vanquished, France would try to retain its commercial and political role both in Europe and around the Mediterranean. The secretary at the French embassy told the Duchess that Britain was not happy with the French activities: "we din'd at the Fr. Amb, & went to the Queen of Spain in the Evening. ... Artaud said that England is jealous of the treaty which France had begun with Algiers."¹⁶

The Duchess immediately became a close friend of the secretary of state, cardinal Consalvi. Their friendship was looked upon with a certain surprise and it was even rumoured that they had an affair. Consalvi was her most frequent visitor and interlocutor—at times he visited her daily. She was exceptionally well-informed about the politics in both Rome and Europe. Though many churchmen lived quite opulent lives, as Åkerblad and Byström had hinted, there were also limits to their worldliness, as the Duchess observed: "A grand ball was given at the Palazzo Farnese for Prince & Prs Leopold by the Napolitan Minister... The Cardinals in general are obliged to go when dancing begins."¹⁷

¹³ Elizabeth Hervey, 14 January 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

¹⁴ In Millin's papers there is a note by the Duchess dated 1817 sending Åkerblad's greetings and asking Millin to come and visit her, fol. 312, MS FR 24683, BNF.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Hervey, 1 August 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

¹⁶ Elizabeth Hervey, 1 July 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives. Alexis-François Artaud de Montor (1772–1849).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Hervey, 19 December 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

During her stay in Rome, she had two luxury editions of Latin works produced. The second and bigger work was an illustrated edition of an Italian translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*. The special feature of this publication was its illustrations. The Duchess planned the work meticulously and hired many of the best landscape painters in Rome to provide these. As both Åkerblad's letters and her diaries attest, there was a great deal of travelling involved. They often went together on trips to scout for views and oversee the work of the artists.¹⁸

The notes from Palestrina east of Rome are typical. She visited the antiquities with Åkerblad and wrote by her drawing of the wall: "Pomardi & Åkerblad who were with me said they were exactly like those of Mycenae in Greece." (Figure 67) Simone Pomardi had accompanied Dodwell to Greece and furnished Åkerblad with the frontispiece to his curse tablet dissertation (Plates 28–29).

Åkerblad had supervised illustrations for Millin's books and journals and knew both artists and production procedures. De Romanis, one of the best printers in Rome, printed around 230 copies of the book. It is possible to follow the work in the Duchess's diaries and in the special notebooks that were dedicated to the production of the book. The trips to the countryside were both entertaining and exhausting. The Duchess kept her artists and antiquaries busy and the tours were encyclopedic sightseeing ventures. She herself ended up guiding foreigners around the sights of Rome and some visitors complained about her erudite excursions.¹⁹

Archaeological activity in Rome was halted. Starting a dig was not the first priority after the return of the ecclesiastical government. The Colosseum had been refilled with earth to facilitate its use in religious processions. The activities of the academies were frozen and no one knew what would become of the work the French had initiated.

¹⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 29 May 1817, Forteg. *L'Eneide di Virgilio recata in versi italiani da Annibal Caro*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1819); Maria Rosaria Nappi, "Una committente inglese per l'editoria romana: la duchessa di Devonshire e l'Eneide di Virgilio" in *700 disegnatore: incisioni, progetti, caricature*, ed. Elisa Debenedetti (Rome: Bonsignori, 1997); Franciska Kuyvenhoven, "Lady Devonshire, an English Maecenas in Post-Napoleonic Rome: Her Publication of Virgil's Aeneid and Hendrik Voogd's Contribution to It," *Mededelingen van het Nederlands Instituut te Rome*, n.s., 11, part 46 (1985): 145–54.

¹⁹ Notebooks 1819, Dormer archives. On the De Romanis printers see Palazzolo, *Editoria e istituzioni a Roma*, 69–89; Lulu Thürheim, *Mein Leben: Erinnerungen aus Österreichs grosser Welt, 1788–1819*, 4 vols. (Munich: Müller, 1913–14), 3:136.

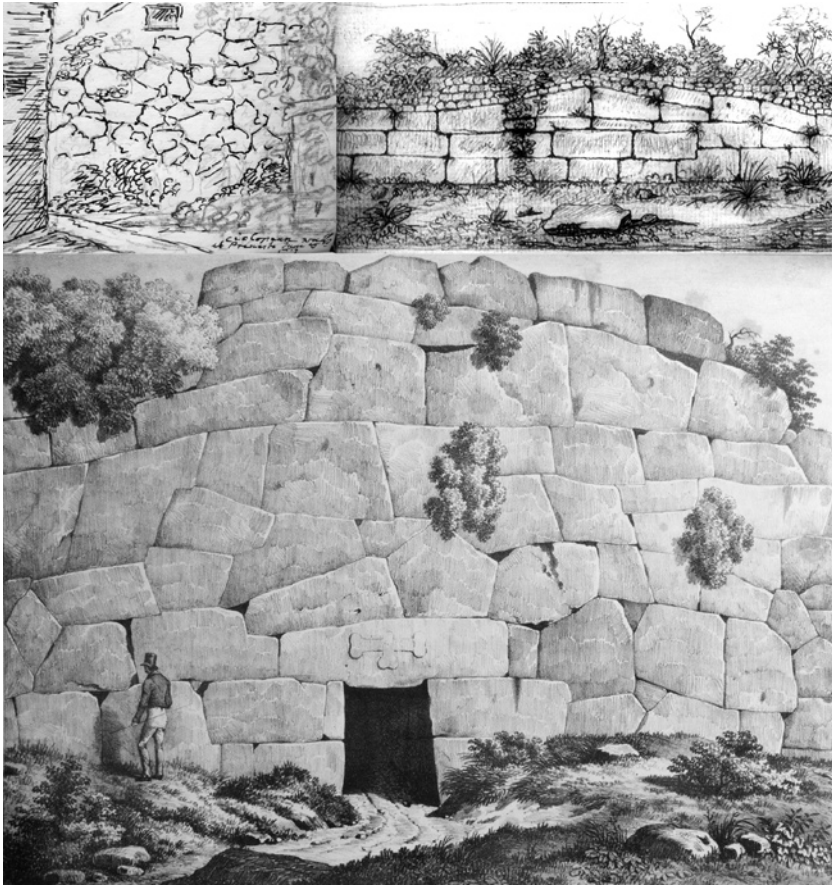


Figure 67. The top left is a sketch by the Duchess: "Ciclopean walls in Praeneste June 5th 1817." Notebook, Rome 1816 II, Dormer archives. Photo author. Top right: Åkerblad's drawing of a 'cyclopean' wall; the piece he drew is easily identified behind the Roman theatre in Fiesole. Vat. lat. 9785, fol. 42v. © BAV. The print is by Dodwell: "Subterranean Gate at Alatrium." Note the phallic symbol over the gate. *Views and Descriptions of Cyclopian or Pelasgic Remains in Greece and Italy...* (London, 1834), pl. 92. Photo author.

In the summer of 1816 the archaeological academy was granted permission to begin its activities again, but the intellectual climate was not favourable for serious antiquarian work. Åkerblad wrote to Ciampi about the first sessions he attended at the newly reopened academy: "Our other scholars do nothing. Just as the renewed and purged Archaeological Academy started its sessions the holidays began, which are until November, and goodnight,

no more discussions.”²⁰ Åkerblad was eager to get back to work. However, the atmosphere had not improved much:

A dissertation by said Guattani on the via Sacra was terribly treated by Fea at the last session of the academy. I always fear that these antiquarians will punch each other and kick each other in the ass and that would be the end of the academy, but fortunately they are content with calling each other asses and brutes instead of starting a fist fight; and after all we have a cardinal for president so my anxiety is futile.²¹

Fea and Guattani continued their battles irrespective of the political changes but the new president did have a cooling effect on their tempers. The reopening of the academies and the more stable situation did lead to intensified work. The digs at the Forum restarted.

Åkerblad discussed one of his pet projects with the Duchess. He had long been interested in understanding the size of the Forum Romanum. Åkerblad proposed that she could support the excavations and maybe obtain a permit from her friend, cardinal Consalvi. By the beginning of December she wrote how “Consalvi has got me leave to make an excavation.”²² Åkerblad explained the rationale of the project:

I, who have for a long time wished to get the much discussed question of the dimensions of Forum Romanum resolved, have induced an English lady to dig on her account, under my direction, in various places in this Forum, and two days ago a dig around the Phocas column was begun, which had been stupidly abandoned after the inscription was discovered during the time of the French, while it is not unimportant to know if the terrain where the column stands is on the same level as the arch of Septimo [Severus], as the via Sacra, and with the pavement which was found in front of the temple believed to be that of Jupiter Stator.²³

We have more information about the excavation around the Phocas column than we do about Åkerblad’s earlier “erudite hole,” where the pavement of the Via Sacra was discovered in 1811. Part of the column had already been dug out during the French occupation and Åkerblad’s friend Filippo Aurelio Visconti had published the finds.²⁴

²⁰ JDÅ to Ciampi, 24 August 1816, KVHAA.

²¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 15 December 1816, KVHAA.

²² Elizabeth Hervey, 3 December 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

²³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 15 December 1816, KVHAA.

²⁴ The most comprehensive account is Giuseppe Antonio Guattani’s description in *Memorie enciclopediche di Antichità e Belle Arti di Roma per il MDCCCXVII* (Rome, 1819), 39–52, with 2 plates. The excavations were also reported in Millin’s *Annales Ency-*

If one wanted to reach the pavement level on the Forum, it made sense to start around the column where some earth had already been removed. The excavations began in mid-December 1816. When the Duchess wrote to Britain a couple of days later, her perspective was somewhat different from Åkerblad's. She did not mention Åkerblad's name in her letters, he was after all only another person in her service:

I have begun a little excavation in the Foro Romano, and they have found a little cup or calice. . . . I am having the Cup cleaned a little and put together. . . . I have employed poor labourers instead of forçats, which is a charity. I saw it particularly pleased my friend Cardinal G[C]onsalvi, and therefore I was doubly pleased to do it.²⁵

The normal procedure was to request forced labour from Roman prisons to do the digging, and her diary entry makes clear that Consalvi had organized a chain gang for her: "Consalvi settled it for me to have the forçats for my excavation but I have hir'd workmen which I see that he is much pleas'd."²⁶ The employment of prisoners was common, as the image from her edition of Virgil shows (Figure 68). The left detail is a procession of prisoners guarded by soldiers on their way to or from work. To the left in the right hand detail a couple is sightseeing at the Forum observing workers guarded by another soldier.



Figure 68. Two details from the Duchess' Virgil edition showing the work at the Forum. Virgil, *L'Eneide*, pl. Campidoglio. Photo author.

clopédiques, t. 3, 1817, 332; *Lettera sopra la colonna dell'imperatore Foca scritta da Filippo Aurelio Visconti conservatore della Imperiale Biblioteca Vaticana* (Rome, 1813).

²⁵ Elizabeth Hervey to Augustus Foster, 16 December 1816, Rome, in Foster, *Two Duchesses*, 425.

²⁶ Elizabeth Hervey, 19 December 1816, MS diary, Dormer archives.

The Duchess left Rome at the end of January 1817 and returned in May. The first thing she did was visit the excavation: “arrived at Rome last night it appears more beautifull than ever to me—I went to the Foro Romano with Akerblad to my Column—they have discovered...8 or 10 marble steps & the old pavement of Rome & as Akerblad maintains the Foro Romano...this delightful Rome is more interesting than ever.”²⁷

There are a fair amount of drawings of the archaeological work on the Forum after 1800. This and another drawing are the only ones known from the Phocas excavation (Figure 69). The two figures on the right are the Duchess and most probably Åkerblad. In that case it is the only image we know of him.



Figure 69. Unknown artist. The excavations at the Phocas column. Gabinetto delle stampe 976, Museo di Roma.

²⁷ Elizabeth Hervey, 4 May 1817, MS diary, Dormer archives.

Åkerblad and the workers had reached the Forum pavement level by May, but the excavation was not yet finished and he wrote to Ciampi: "We others dig more than we write and to give account for excavations before they are finished is always annoying, especially in a letter."²⁸ The days were getting longer and work was proceeding into the evenings. Both Consalvi and the pope came to visit the excavations. The Forum became a social arena where people met by torchlight to follow the work. The Duchess went "in the evening to the Forum where all is going on & affording the greatest interest—new marbles, the Colissee where... Lord Byron who just alighted from his carriage & darted by."²⁹ The international nobility was arriving in droves; Åkerblad summed it up: "We... have heaps of Milordi."³⁰

While the perspective exaggerates the depth of the Phocas pit, a considerable amount of earth still had to be moved (Figure 70). The couple to the left is listening to the explanatory words of a guide, most probably one of Åkerblad's antiquarian colleagues serving visitors in Rome. At the beginning of June 1817 Åkerblad was ready to give a longer account of the results. Like the Duchess he wrote about 'his' digs:

No one talks anymore about the antediluvian urns but instead of my excavation around the Phocas column, an excavation that every day becomes more interesting. The pavement of the Forum (and I believe that we do trample the pavement of the Forum and leave it to Fea to think differently) is now uncovered on two sides of the column and it is really magnificent, all made out of large slabs of travertine. The grandiose marble steps that lead from the bottom to the base of the column are well conserved at the western side.³¹

Åkerblad wrote an article, to publicise the work and its finds, which was published in Rome and Milan.³² He was now planning to convince new patrons to continue the work:

At last, our excavations have encouraged others to undertake similar investigations: the Portuguese ambassador has discovered the ancient pavement of the Clivo Capitolino, between the temple of Concordia and that of [Jupiter] Tonans and now I am trying to convince the French Ambassador and

²⁸ JDÅ to Ciampi, 3 May 1817, Forteg.

²⁹ Elizabeth Hervey, 19 May 1817, MS diary, Dormer archives.

³⁰ JDÅ to Ciampi, 11 September 1816, KVHAA.

³¹ JDÅ to Ciampi, 7 June 1817, KVHAA.

³² "Lettera del Sig. Barone Akerblad, letterato Svezese, sullo scavo fatto in Roma intorno alla Colonna Foca," *Biblioteca italiana*, t. 10, Fascicolo Giugno 1818; *Diario di Roma*, no. 57, 18 July 1818, no. 59, 25 July 1818.



Figure 70. Jean Alaux. Column of Phocas, early 1820s. Museo di Roma.

the Russian minister that they also should start digging on our Campo Vaccino to finally discover all of the Forum Romanum.³³

Åkerblad tried to get further sponsorship and start new excavations. He did his best to persuade the French ambassador Blacas and his Russian friend Italinsky to fund further exploits.³⁴ The excavations at the Phocas column were mentioned in most guides and descriptions of Rome in the following years. The Duchess' sponsorship was sometimes frowned upon, often because she was a woman. The Irish writer Lady Morgan defended her:

While Ciceroni dispute and Virtuosi stare, and Roman Princes and Cardinals boast of past glories of the "eterna città," the Duchess of Devonshire is more effectually doing the honours of Rome, ancient and modern, by illustrating Horace, reprinting Virgil, making excavations, giving countenance and patronage to living talent, and bringing forward modest professors into the distinguished circles of her own society.³⁵

One of the "modest professors" brought into the Duchess' distinguished society was Åkerblad. The relationship between patrons and clients had not changed; after the French campaigns archaeological work in Rome was once again based on individual sponsorship. The situation remained thus until systematic work at the Forum began in the second half of the century.

The Duchess and Åkerblad had formed a bond. During the excavations they saw each other daily. Åkerblad had also been closely involved in work on the new edition of Virgil. That they saw the digs from different perspectives is not strange; such was the relation between nobility and modest professors.

The Duchess's interest and pride in the excavations she sponsored are also obvious in her edition of Virgil. When she had the Forum depicted she put the Phocas column in the centre and it is clearly visible that there is work going on. The earth from the pit has not yet been transported away. To the right there is a woman reading. This is certainly an image of herself reading (Virgil?), while surveying the work at the Forum (Figure 71).

³³ JDÅ to Ciampi, 7 June 1816, KVHAA.

³⁴ The French ambassador Pierre Louis Jean Casimir de Blacas had been recommended to Åkerblad by Sacy before coming to Rome. Blacas to Sacy, 13 October 1816, Rome, fol. 102, MS 2375, I de F.

³⁵ Lady Morgan, *Italy*, 3 vols. (London, 1821), 2:353.



Figure 71. The Forum from the Duchess's 1819 edition of Virgil, detail. Virgil, *L'Eneide*, pl. Foro. Photo author.

Åkerblad knew that whatever finds were made around the Phocas column would most probably not be of any great importance. The first thing the Duchess had noted in her letter was typically the find of the little cup. Åkerblad was more interested in what information could be gained from the digs. He expressed both scepticism and optimism when he wrote to Ciampi about the excavations:

We live in a time of trivialities, and with a people of pygmies. The great and important discoveries have already been made, and what is left for us is only trifles. But every new find, however small it may be, always has its worth and merits to be deposited in the immense archive of human knowledge, it is enough just not to claim that every bagatelle is important which makes both the discovery and its discoverer ridiculous.³⁶

He did not expect to find exceptional things, but he knew that every little piece of information would help to complete the picture of what was not yet sufficiently understood. He abhorred the pretence of constant great discoveries. Åkerblad published a similar passage (partly quoted above in

³⁶ JDÅ to Ciampi, 15 December 1816, KVHAA.

the section on Phoenicia) in an 1817 dissertation. Aware of the mockery that the battles of the antiquaries in Rome had attracted, he reminded his colleagues that their infighting and the exaggeration of the importance of their discoveries only exposed them to ridicule:

It is however this mania to minutely discuss every item that has slightly discredited the craft of the antiquary in the eyes of people of the world, who find laughable the high importance we often attach to objects of very little interest. Every new discovery, however small it might be, has, without doubt, its value and merits to be deposited in the immense archive of human knowledge, but let us refrain from long commentaries that do nothing but hinder real learning.³⁷

When Sacy reviewed this treatise—it was also reprinted in Paris—he remarked on exactly this passage and added: “Let us hope that Mr Åkerblad will draw the consequences of this principle . . . and soon depose in these *archives* the important work he has since several years dedicated to the Egyptian [Demotic] Rosetta inscription.”³⁸

These two quotations describe Åkerblad’s scientific approach to archaeology and antiquity studies. He had, for instance, often complained that excavations at the Forum were haphazard. He wanted to make more systematic digs to try to understand the dimensions of the Forum. This could only be done through well-planned investigations. He had also often commented upon the lack of documentation. He had wanted Fea to occupy himself with what he knew best, the history of archaeology in Rome and its surroundings. He had also been clear at an early stage about the importance of keeping finds together as well as documenting at least where, and in what circumstances, objects were found. His critique of Fauvel in 1800 was explicit on this point.

The Duchess left Rome in 1818 to visit Britain. On her way back to Rome she collected her mail in Genoa. On 15 February 1819 she received a letter from Rome: “I heard again from C. Consalvi today, he wrote with his usual kindness to break to me poor Åkerblad’s death—he broke a blood vessel in the night & was found dead—I truly regard him, & he is a loss to literature & science.”³⁹ When the Duchess arrived in Rome, the first thing she did was check the new illustrations for her Virgil and “[t]hen to my

³⁷ Åkerblad, *Inscription phénicienne*, 19.

³⁸ *Journal des Savans*, July 1817, 440.

³⁹ Elizabeth Hervey, 15 February 1819, MS diary, Dormer archives.

column of Focas.”⁴⁰ She wanted to see the work that had been done since she left Rome the previous year.

Åkerblad was found dead in his bed on the morning of 8 February 1819. He had lived in a furnished room in Via Condotti 56.⁴¹ The physician declared the cause of death to be a stroke. Åkerblad was 55 years old, overweight and in current medical thinking he would probably have been a standard victim of cardiovascular disease. Pentini was immediately informed and went the same morning to seal Åkerblad’s room to prevent the removal of any property. Later the secretary of Louis Bonaparte—Napoleon’s brother and ex-king of Holland who lived in exile in Rome—came by. He informed Pentini that his employer would pay for Åkerblad’s funeral, as they were “intimate friends.”

News of Åkerblad’s death spread quickly. Soon all the foreign residents in Rome knew about his death; it was noted in many diaries and much correspondence. Cancellieri wrote to Sacy in Paris lamenting the death of what he, at least, thought were their common friends: Millin had also died, in Paris in 1818: “Who would have foreseen, that I could have survived our common friends Millin & Akerblad, that we have miserably lost.”⁴²

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Hervey, 19 March 1819, MS diary, Dormer archives.

⁴¹ Pentini paid the debts to Åkerblad’s landlady, Marianne Schiaroli. Pentini to Chancery Board, 15 May 1819, Rome, no. 973, *Skrivelser från konsuler*, vol. 66, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

⁴² Cancellieri to Sacy, August 1819, Rome, fol. 170, MS 2375, I de F.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

“DESPISED BY SWEDEN AND BY EVERY SWEDE”

Among the many writers and artists who visited Italy after the wars were a number of Swedes.¹ One of these was writer and poet Per Daniel Atterbom (1790–1855), who arrived in Rome in 1818. Atterbom wrote long letters to his poet mentor, Erik Gustaf Geijer, and mentioned the Swedes he met in Rome.

Byström talks about Sweden and Carl XIV with warmth, and does thus not resemble Åkerblad, who according to rumour cultivates his disinclination for his fatherland so far that he says he is Danish.* This Åkerblad lives only a few steps away from me, but I surely never visit him. He who despises Sweden should be despised by Sweden and by every Swede, especially if he is of Swedish origin. Åkerblad's way of thinking is even more despicable if it is true, as is said, that it is only caused by an injured ego.²

The asterisk refers to a note at the bottom of the letter which has been partly destroyed at the edge: “[This is] *said in Germany, but Byström knows nothing about this, though he has told me [?] other anecdotes about [Åkerblad].” Atterbom admitted that the other permanent Roman resident from Sweden, the sculptor Byström, had not verified that Åkerblad denied his Swedish nationality.

When Atterbom returned to Sweden he edited and published his letters to Geijer in the journal *Svea*. The printed passage on Åkerblad is harsher: “Åkerblad cultivates his disinclination for the innocent fatherland to the extreme so that he gives himself out as being Danish, and takes every opportunity among foreigners to depict the Swedes as barbarians and idiots.”³ He repeated the exhortation to despise Åkerblad. The earlier uncertainty as regards Åkerblad's attitude toward Sweden had changed

¹ For an exhaustive treatment of the Swedish travellers in Italy during the nineteenth century see: Bengt Lewan, *Drömmen om Italien: Italien i svenska resenärers skildringar från Atterbom till Snoilsky* (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1966). See also his comments 35 years later: “Drömmen om Italien” in *Humanist vid Medelhavet: Reflektioner och studier samlade med anledning av Svenska institutet i Roms 75-årsjubileum*, ed. Börje Magnusson (Stockholm: Rubicon, 2001).

² Atterbom to Erik Gustaf Geijer, 14 March 1818, Rome, p. 51, Ep. A 15, KB.

³ Atterbom, “Bref ifrån Rom. (Till Professor E. G. Geijer),” *Svea*, no. 3, 1820, 184. Reprinted in several later editions.

and was now stated as fact. When Atterbom published his letter he knew that Åkerblad was dead. Byström had written to him:

So now we are only in alles 3 Swedes in Rome since Åkerblad has taken up lodgings by Cayi Sesti Pyramid. I do not know whether the learned world has lost something in him, as a good Swede it was no loss—may his bones now rest in peace.⁴

Byström knew that Atterbom thought poorly of Åkerblad and perhaps this was his subtle attempt to tell Atterbom to leave him in peace. But Atterbom had no qualms about smearing Åkerblad's reputation. He also knew that he could publish without any risk of retribution; there was no one in Sweden who would defend Åkerblad. As usual the rumours took on a life of their own. A Nordic traveller who met Atterbom repeated the accusation, adding the completely spurious fact that Åkerblad had been offered a professorship in Sweden: "Åkerblad, that calls himself a Dane, has refused a professorship in Uppsala because he finds it too *cold* there."⁵

Was there any truth to the rumours? If Byström, who lived in Rome, was unaware that Åkerblad presented himself as a Dane, it is legitimate to suspect that the rumour was untrue. Nevertheless, the rumour lived on. Åkerblad's relations with Sweden were not without conflict, but he did maintain contact with both Swedes in Rome and his patrons in Stockholm until his death. He also sent his treatises to the antiquities academy in Stockholm to let the academy know that he was still scientifically active in Rome. But as in the case of the slander by Lagerswärd and Pentini, the rumours continued to spread. Even Callmer took them at face value and wrote that Åkerblad had no contacts with other Swedes in Rome except Byström, who in his turn had frequent visitors from Sweden whom Åkerblad could not have avoided meeting.

Reading Atterbom and the diaries of other Nordic visitors makes clear that they moved almost exclusively in foreign circles in Rome. Their interactions with Italians, except when it came to everyday matters, were few. This contrasts with Åkerblad's long integration in Roman social life. Notwithstanding what he thought about Sweden and the Swedes, it is understandable that he had no great interest in socializing with all Swedes who

⁴ Byström to Atterbom, 27 May 1819, Rome, G 8 b, UUL.

⁵ Frederik Schmidt, diary entry 11 October 1818, in *Provst Frederik Schmidts Dagbøger*, ed. Ole Jacobsen and Johanne Brandt-Nielsen, 3 vols. (Copenhagen: Gad, 1966–85), 2:386. See also Frederik Janson Estrup to Münster, 17 June 1818, Rome, in "Dagbøger og breve fra H. F. J. Estrups udenlandsrejser," *Danske Magazin*, 1962/65, 339.

showed up in Rome. In the same letter to Geijer Atterbom himself had quipped (partly cited above) about the other Swedes in Rome who: "Like the Swedish Nobility and Military in general, they are presumably only judges of uniforms, balls, horses, w[hore]s and dogs. When one adds a great deal of cooking and serving knowledge the entire extent of our noble youth's world-view is given account for."⁶ Such critique of the Swedish upper classes was of course not published, not even in a milder form; Atterbom had after all to consider propriety and his patrons' support.

Atterbom's judgement of Åkerblad is an almost typical expression of the age. He was a Swedish Romantic poet at a time when the notion of nationality and Swedishness was becoming increasingly important. The catastrophic losses of Finland and the German provinces made it obvious that Sweden had lost the influence it had during the brief moment of 'greatness' in the seventeenth century. Criticism of Sweden, in which Åkerblad certainly took part in some form, was resented. Atterbom was also politically naïve. It was he who had read resistance to Napoleon into Thorvaldsen's Alexander frieze.⁷

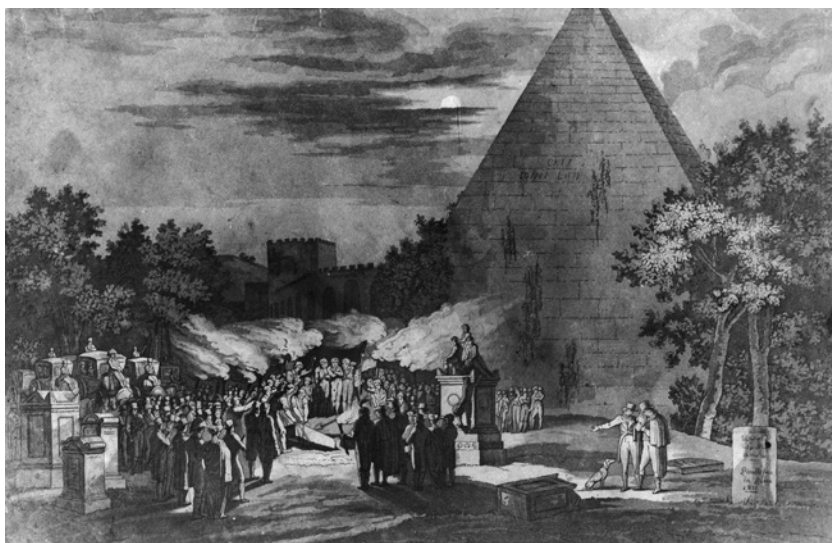
The unfulfilled wishes of Åkerblad's fellow Egyptologist Zoëga had been to be laid to rest by the pyramid at the non-Catholic cemetery at the San Paolo gate. Now it was Åkerblad, instead, who "[took] up lodgings by Cayi Sesti Pyramid." Non-Catholics were only allowed to be buried at night. Swedish artist Jonas Åkerström's burial, depicted below, took place in the last quarter of the moon, but for dramatic effect a full moon was often shown in images of the ceremony at the cemetery (Figure 72a–b).

Pentini claimed that he had not become involved in the funeral arrangements because: "As I had seen in the parish registry that Mr Åkerblad had signed himself as Baron d'Åkerblad of the *Irish nation* I thought it best not to interfere any more with his funeral . . . because this gentleman appears to have himself renounced his nation."⁸ But Pentini did interfere. Lagerswärd in Florence notified Stockholm: "The Swedes avoided rendering their last homage to their compatriot because they learned from

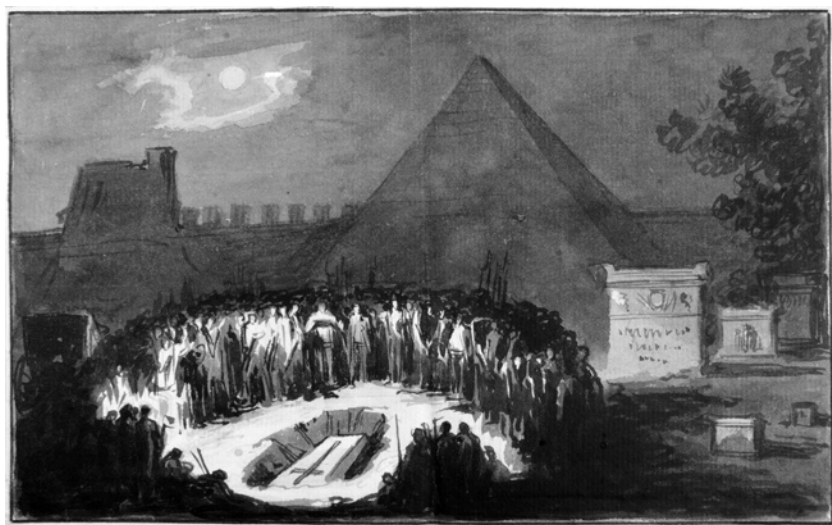
⁶ Atterbom to Geijer, 14 March 1818, Rome, p. 51, Ep. A 15, KB.

⁷ On politics in Rome after the Restoration see my: "Art, Nationalism and Politics during Occupation and Restoration Rome: 'O che razza infame è mai quella dei leccaculi!'," in *The City of the Soul: The Literary Making of Rome*, ed. Sabrina Norlander and Stefano Fogelberg-Rota (Rome: Swedish Institute, 2013).

⁸ Pentini to Chancery Board, 10 February 1819, Rome, Skrivelser från konsuler, vol. 66, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.



a



b

Figure 72a–b. The top image is a 1811 print by Bartolomeo Pinelli. Museo di Roma. The bottom drawing depicts the 1795 funeral of the Swedish artist Jonas Åkerström, who drew the meeting at the Arcadia (Figure 55). Unknown artist, Biographica, Åkerström (kartavd. m form), SNA.

M. Pentini that the deceased had publicly disowned his fatherland."⁹ As with other pieces of information about the affair, it is hard to believe that Åkerblad's Swedish acquaintances in Rome did not attend his funeral.

The nine heavy chests that Åkerblad had once left in Livorno were by now reduced to very little. He had sold off most of his possessions during the lean years. His finances had improved lately, but according to the estate inventory that Pentini sent to Stockholm in May, Åkerblad died almost without possessions: two watches, a few bronzes of "peu de conséquence," some old coins and a few engraved stones. There were some books but Pentini lists no manuscripts or papers except for the correspondence that he thought best to burn.¹⁰ He found very little cash. There were, however, some letters of credit and after his debts had been paid off, Pentini offered to send the remaining money to Åkerblad's sister. In the same letter Pentini tried to convince the authorities in Stockholm to pass on the consular position to his own son.

Pentini may have sold off some of Åkerblad's belongings. The French ambassador Blacas wrote that he owned antiquities that had belonged to Åkerblad. When the two notebooks (Vat. lat. 9784 and 9785) were bought by the Vatican library they came from the collection of a cardinal Pantini [sic]. Pentini probably did burn Åkerblad's correspondence but obviously took the notebooks and kept them. After his death in 1820 they became the property of his son Francesco Pentini (1797–1869, created cardinal deacon in 1863) and were eventually sold to the library. Swedish Egyptologist Karl Piehl bought other bits of Åkerblad's papers in Rome in the 1880s.¹¹

Åkerblad's tombstone was erected a few years after his death. We do not know whose initiative this was, or who paid for the stone. Åkerblad himself had written a classicizing Latin epigraphy for an American friend who was buried in the same cemetery. This text now adorns her large monument only a few metres away from his humble stone.¹² The Latin epitaph on Åkerblad's tomb reads: "In memory of Joann. David Ackerblad,

⁹ Lagerswärd to Engeström, 20 February 1819, Florence, Depescher från beskickningarna i Italien 1810–19, Kabinettet för utrikes brevväxlingen, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

¹⁰ Pentini to Chancery Board, Rome 15 May 1819, Rome, no. 973, Skrivelser från konsuler, vol. 66, Huvudarkivet, UD, Kabinettet, SNA.

¹¹ Blacas to Sacy, 13 July 1819, Rome, fol. 105, MS 2375, I de F: "two small Persian rolls or seals that M. Ackerblad brought from Greece and that now are mine."; Marco Buonocore, *Theodor Mommsen e gli studi sul mondo antico: Dalle sue lettere conservate nella Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* (Naples: Jovene, 2003), 128; Piehl, *Illustre orientaliste suédois*.

¹² JDÅ to Friederike Brun, 7 February 1810, Rome, fol. 147, NKS 1992, KBK; *Journal för Litteraturen och Theatern*, 13 April 1813, no. 85.

Swede...this [stone] was raised in 1824 so that a man known for his learning abroad will not lack a memorial because of the neglect of his own." Åkerblad's Roman friends accused the Swedes of not caring about their dead.

In Sweden Åkerblad's death passed almost unnoticed. His fellow Stockholm academician, diplomat and oriental traveller Erik Bergstedt promised to write Åkerblad's obituary, but it was never delivered. Bergstedt died in 1829, in very different material conditions from Åkerblad. His library comprising 3,588 titles of mainly "history, theology, Roman and Greek classics and fine arts" was sold.¹³

Atterbom's advice to the Swedes was heeded; Åkerblad vanished from the Swedish record of learning. He resurfaced briefly when a school of Egyptian studies at the university of Uppsala presented him as a predecessor.¹⁴ His other interests went mainly unnoticed until Callmer published his essay in 1952.

¹³ Schück, *Vitterhetsakademien*, 7:410. Sales catalogue: *Förteckning öfver framl. Stats-Secreteraren och Ridd. af K. N. O. Herr Eric Bergstedts Boksamling...* (Stockholm, 1829).

¹⁴ Jens D. C. Lieblein, *Katalog över Egyptiska Fornlemningar i National-Museum* (Stockholm, 1868); Lieblein, *Det gamla Egypten i dess skrift: Ur vår tids forskning* (Stockholm, 1877); Piehl, *Illustre orientaliste suédois*; Carl Frängsmyr, *Uppsala universitets historia 1852–1916*, 2 vols. (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2010), 2:175f. Before Callmer (1952), Henrik Schück and Karl Warburg, *Illustrerad svensk litteraturhistoria: Gustavianska Tiden* (Stockholm: Geber, 1927), 175–77, mention his other activities and after Callmer, Sten Lindroth underlines that Åkerblad's philological knowledge had no successor in Sweden for several generations. Sten Lindroth, *Svensk Lärdomshistoria: Gustavianska tiden* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1981), 224–28.

CONCLUSION

An influential criticism against biography is made in a short article by Pierre Bourdieu: *L'illusion biographique*.¹ One of the elements in the creation of this 'biographical illusion' is a conclusion. The biographer's choices and adherence to the genre creates its own dynamics and gives a false sense to a series of occurrences that can be constructed as coherent only in hindsight. An example is Wolfgang Hildesheimer's biography of the precocious British Romantic scholar Andrew Marbot (1801–1830). Marbot shared mutual acquaintances with Åkerblad, and committed suicide in Italy. The biography was well received, though some—but not all—reviewers pointed out that in fact Marbot had never existed. Hildesheimer's book is a happy example of the biographical illusion: by following the rules of the game the illusion was perfectly maintained.²

In the context of this predominantly intellectual biography, such a conclusion would be the summing up of the deeds that constituted Åkerblad's scholarly life. Indeed, he had been a pioneer in a few areas, which earned him some fame during his lifetime. But such a summation would not be very interesting in Åkerblad's case, rather the opposite. One of the main interests in capturing aspects of his life may be the extent to which these cannot be summed up to a coherent whole, and why. His career was never crowned by the unmitigated success that is the rationale for many biographies.

In 1819 the period that had started with the French Revolution had drawn to a close. The map of Europe had regained many of its pre-revolutionary borders. The events Åkerblad had observed first in Constantinople and later in Rome were only the beginning of the colonial race. France and Britain's interests in the Mediterranean were on the increase. The peace in 1815 was the end of Anglo-French rivalry on European soil, but that competition would continue in other territories was immediately clear. Soon France invaded Algeria and by the end of the century large parts of Africa and Asia would be governed by European powers. Russia continued

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, "L'illusion biographique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 62–63 (1986): 69–72.

² Wolfgang Hildesheimer, *Marbot: Eine Biographie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981). *Marbot* is catalogued as biography in the Swedish national library catalogue.

its push south and eastwards and fought several wars with the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century. The Russian Empire grew by war and conquest and soon encompassed large parts of Central Asia.

After its foray into European politics in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Sweden had withdrawn and for the rest of the nineteenth century it would be little disturbed by convulsions in continental Europe. Ten years after the loss of Finland in 1809 Sweden was coming to terms with its reduced political identity. The annexing of Norway in the end games of the Napoleonic wars had offered some consolation. Sweden's contacts with the Ottoman Empire were reduced to the necessities.

Åkerblad's life was greatly influenced by these upheavals and political transformations. To what extent he conserved his self-professed stubbornness in the troubled years of the 1790s is hard to say. He disobeyed royal orders in 1804 and it is unlikely that he ever intended to return to Sweden while he was in Italy. When the situation deteriorated in Rome he instead contemplated going to Paris. Of his status as "a dangerous man of Enlightenment" little remained. It had become increasingly clear that radical political change was unlikely to happen in Sweden. 'Enlightenment' has not been used frequently as an analytical category above. The debate on its influence on Sweden is ongoing and its final societal and political effects could only be felt after 1809 when royal power was curtailed. But the metaphor of 'enlightenment' was powerful. Åkerblad realised that little light would penetrate what he perceived as Swedish despotism and threw it on other issues. He wrote how the Egyptian language Coptic had served him as a torch in his investigations on the Rosetta Stone. Mouradgea d'Ohsson fiercely criticized Åkerblad for using torches instead of ordinary lamps when going out at night, a proof that he behaved above his station. Åkerblad's last public appearance was by torchlight. Non-Catholics burials were only allowed outside the Roman city walls and at night, supposedly to protect the participants from the dangers of religious fanaticism. This final scene was illuminated by torches and evokes a last theatrical appearance.

Åkerblad's birth as a commoner made it impossible for him to rise in the Swedish foreign service; the same was true for Erik Bergstedt and other non-noble Swedish diplomats. They were themselves painfully aware of this fact. Social extraction was not only important in the Swedish context but also an important factor on the international scene. To find patronage was necessary. While a noble or upper class extraction was not a pre-requisite to advancement in 'the republic of letters,' ingratiating yourself with nobility usually was. Universities and learned societies grew

in importance, but as these predominantly promoted co-nationals Åkerblad could not gain much support from them. The Swedish academies and societies were of little importance and did not have the capacity to support scholars outside of Sweden, even if they had so wanted. Åkerblad's career path—even during the years following the French revolution—was in most respects framed in contexts that, rather than being revolutionary or 'enlightened,' belonged to the *ancien régime*. The political and societal changes in Sweden that would eventually result from the European upheavals arrived too late to benefit him. In the international arena he could only with great difficulty have escaped the limits of his extraction and nationality. He was mired in the traditions of preceding generations and not attuned to the possibilities of new circumstances. But to stress this would be anachronistic. He could not have known. Åkerblad's not always pliant character certainly influenced his career, both as a civil servant and as a scholar. Protracted battles with superiors were not a good strategy for advancement. However, whatever he could have done to procure himself advantages—for instance hiding his political opinions and tempering his criticism of Sweden—may in the end have made little difference.

A central issue is that of 'merit.' How important was merit in shaping Åkerblad's and some of his colleagues' careers? Merit is one of the factors that might have promoted a humble scholar, but seldom beyond a certain level. Indeed, he and some of his colleagues were exceptionally gifted scholars, and their contemporaries often recognized this, but merit was not the main factor when forging a successful career.

Though many of Åkerblad's dissertations are steeped in an antiquarian tradition his scholarship can be connected to a number of larger trends in the second half of the eighteenth century. His linguistic interests were informed by attempts to classify languages in families. He strove to understand the evolution of several Semitic languages and dialects. He learnt Hebrew, Arabic and several other Middle Eastern languages. More than many of his contemporaries he knew that grammar was an important element in understanding the history of languages. These insights served him well in his work with the Rosetta inscription.

His view of language was not romantic and he knew that languages developed in mixed cultural milieus and were influenced by a range of different factors. His deep knowledge of both Greek and oriental languages made him immune to attempts to essentialize Greek language and culture. While supporting Greek independence he did not advocate a return to the ancient language, but considered New Greek as valid as any other modern living language. He did not experience how invented language

characteristics were singled out as national and cultural traits and made into bizarre elements promoting nationalism, and later racism. He knew the richness of Arabic and Turkish literature and learning, and would not have taken seriously the theories that later associated language with race and cultural origins.

His language interests were wide. He strove to understand alphabets, grammar and vocabulary—as a means of interpreting difficult texts and placing them in the then little-known cultural and historical contexts. The study of curse tablets is a typical example. They were not wholly unknown and scattered examples had been noted, but Åkerblad was the first to make a detailed study of them, as well as taking their magical content seriously. Ancient Greek did present linguistic difficulties; but in this case it was rather the subject matter that was ripe for investigation. Coptic presented similar problems; a language that was generally known, but not to the extent of understanding dialectal differences, and with a grammar and vocabulary that was insufficiently documented. The secular nature of Åkerblad's interests is evident in his Coptic studies; he found the mainly religious texts tedious. But in the case of the little known Phoenician language and culture the religious and mythological elements were still largely unknown and thus challenged him to investigate the development of Phoenician religion and migration in the Mediterranean. The minute examinations of Phoenician texts were necessary first investigations into an important period of Mediterranean history. Åkerblad and other scholars of his generation were the first to connect scattered archaeological remains and Phoenician texts with a culture that hitherto had been scantily known from classical sources. Demotic was yet again a different case, as no one knew what the script represented. The visual aspects were fundamental and Åkerblad's experience with a range of alphabets and writing systems was essential in his partially successful work with the Rosetta inscription.

Åkerblad died before any solution to the Egyptian puzzle had been found. Three years later Champollion presented his first reading of hieroglyphs. Åkerblad's early work with the Demotic inscription was one of a few important contributions leading up to the decipherment. Soon knowledge about ancient Egypt would change many perspectives on ancient history.

It would take longer for Phoenician studies to flourish. New texts were necessary and were only found when archaeological exploration began in the wake of European military conquest of the Near East in the second half of the century. Greek magic was likewise a slow starter and only began to interest scholars at the end of the eighteenth century when preconceptions

about classical Greek culture were questioned again. Systematic archaeological investigations were also important as they furnished scholars with more texts, on lead tablets and on papyri. These were discovered when Egypt was beginning to be mined not only for 'antiquities' but also for less glorious archaeological finds. Nevertheless, one could possibly argue that it is only during the last few decades that the full implications of Greek magical practices have been integrated into the mainstream of classical studies.

Archaeology in Rome likewise took off slowly; it was a century after Åkerblad dug his "erudite holes" until his dream of a completely freed Forum Romanum was realised.

Another central theme, and possibly the most contentious issue discussed in this book, is the history of oriental studies. Scholarship did not evolve in a political vacuum. What today may seem pure linguistic work was not devoid of political significance. This had already been proven when Åkerblad was invited to join the French invasion of Egypt in 1798. Knowledge of languages was one of many necessary resources needed for war and colonization. What has been shown above is that the large discipline of orientalism is neither easily defined, nor easily compacted into a manageable field for our present interests and preoccupations. The influence of the Saidian 'orientalism' definition is difficult to overestimate. Nevertheless, the weariness in connection to the debate is palpable in many works that have dealt with the history of oriental studies in recent decades. What has been shown here is that if we wish to go beyond this debate, there are many areas which are ripe for further investigation. The geographical scope must be widened; the interest in the 'orient' was alive in many places in Europe and not only in the capitals of colonial powers. We are still waiting for modern surveys of oriental knowledge production outside of what has traditionally been considered the centres.

Åkerblad's and some of his colleagues' perception of Arabic and Turkish learning and culture cannot be used to confirm a stereotypical view of Europe's engagement with the 'other.' I have proposed various explanations for why some scholars were more respectful than others; linguistic skill was certainly one factor that nuanced the views of, for instance, Åkerblad. Another example is his critique of the removal of antiquities. The fact that he did not originate from one of the countries that participated in the 'war for antiquities' made it possible to formulate a critique of acquisition and expansion.

Without claiming that Åkerblad was exceptional, it is clear that his interests, and the ways he went about satisfying his curiosity, are hard

to connect to an often caricature idea about 'orientalist' scholarship. Like every scholar, he was deeply mired in the issues of his time. This may serve as a reminder that our own preconceptions about orientalist scholarship are ripe for historical investigation.

Political opinions played an important role within the international community of scholars. The Egyptian work of the 1810s is a model example of how political convictions were important in shaping the learned networks of Restoration Europe. The political consequences of the re-establishment of papal power in Italy were dramatic for Åkerblad and many of his friends. Though they had not sympathized with the French invasion of Italy, they had used their connections to advance their scholarship during the French occupation. Nationality was becoming ever more important as scholarship and science were turning into constitutive elements in the creation of national identities. How Åkerblad's difficult relationship with Sweden influenced his reputation is an almost perfect example of this development.

The maintenance of the biographical illusion often prescribes—and a conclusion certainly does—that the biographee is made to represent one or another historical development. The interest in following Åkerblad—apart from the vicissitudes of his rather exceptional life—may be that his manifold interests present an image of scholarship on the verge of the institutionalization of his disciplines. His activities cannot be easily summarized; they rather resemble a chaotic and unsystematic jumble. His two shafts dug at the Forum can serve as metaphors; two vertical investigations through layers of time in search of a final point where the knowledge transmitted through literature and written records could be proven as historical truth. Such an 'antiquarian' mode is almost typical, but nevertheless his curiosity and intuition made him work within several fields that would only later flourish. He knew that when he published in Italy he wrote in an antiquated style, but he was also conscious that his subject matter was often new and sometimes his conclusions controversial. The unifying element was geographical; his interests were predominately eastern Mediterranean. The study of this area has gone through great changes during the last two centuries, but it might be justified to conclude that Åkerblad's and some of his fellow scholars' view of this area as a crucible of cultures prefigures our contemporary view. Their view of cultural transmissions from east to west resembles the present view rather more than that of the later eighteenth century, which often singled out the exceptionality of Greek classical culture.

Åkerblad was an astute critic of his fellow scholars and in many instances he has been vindicated in his judgements. Many of the contemporaries he praised were pioneers; Lanzi, Toderini and Zoëga, to name but three active in Italy. Most of those whom he treated with irony or disdain have disappeared from the mainstream history of their respective disciplines. In many respects he was a fair judge of quality; an example is how in the heated polemics on Micali's history of pre-Roman Italy, he took a position not dissimilar to our contemporary ideas on Micali's benefits and weaknesses (which *per se* is no certain indication of their lasting validity).

The many circumstances that influenced Åkerblad's scholarly choices have been highlighted. The drastic political changes were major obstacles in forging a successful career. Whether such circumstances were more influential than in any other period is hard to prove. However, that the conditions during almost a quarter century of wars were a critical factor in forming Åkerblad's career is without doubt. Historians of this period tend to identify the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries as constitutive of what we now call the 'modern period.' This can be an effect of assigning exaggerated importance to one period of study, but whatever conclusions can be drawn concerning the impact on later developments, it was a turbulent time.

While Åkerblad frequently criticized other scholars, he was not always sure about the worth of his own knowledge and contributions. He wrote to Champollion: "I sometimes see the weakness of others, but I feel even more my own."³ This may not just have been an expression of false modesty. When it came to publishing Åkerblad repeatedly expressed hesitation and doubts. He never fulfilled the promise of bringing out a book or any larger study. He announced dissertations that never appeared, his Coptic dictionary was abandoned, the Rosetta work and the Egyptian geography were never continued. He did lack resources to publish, but other scholars in a similar economic situation often managed to publish more; it was not only a question of money.

At different times I have faced the question of why Åkerblad did not achieve more. Beyond all the various reasons for Åkerblad's failure to have a successful scholarly career, the question remains unanswerable. His friends were likewise puzzled, even when they had intimate knowledge of his difficult economic circumstances and not always malleable character.

³ JDÅ to Champollion, Rome 12 June 1812, NAF 20357, BNF.

Åkerblad's friend Millin had fallen on hard times during the Restoration. Nevertheless, the year before his death in 1818 he managed to start a new journal, possibly to the chagrin of Sacy who had welcomed the demise of the *Magasin encyclopédique*. Millin reprinted Åkerblad's 1817 treatise on a Phoenician inscription in the *Annales encyclopédiques*. In the introduction to Åkerblad's article he expressed what many thought. It is both a fitting tribute to Åkerblad and another way of phrasing the question of why Åkerblad never fulfilled his friends' high expectations:

Mr. Akerblad, whose erudition is so extensive, his criticism so sure, his talent so huge, could surely occupy himself with some sizeable work: he does not produce, it is true, anything but short dissertations, but they all are, in their genre, masterpieces that in the highest degree make his knowledge and spirit shine.⁴

⁴ Åkerblad, "Lettre sur une inscription phénicienne trouvée à Athènes," *Annales encyclopédiques*, 1817, 195.

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- Åkerman, see Akerman.
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INDEX

- Aachen, 142
 ‘Abd al-Laṭīf c. 1160–1231, 255–56, 270
 ‘Abd el-Malek, 110
 Abdul Hamid I, 1725–1789, reign 1774–1789, 31
 Aberdeen, George Hamilton Gordon, earl of 1784–1860, 174
 Abildgaard, Nicolai Abraham 1743–1809, 181n
 Abrantès see Junot
 Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, 54, 244, 255n, 281–82, 331
 Academy, Archaeological (Rome), 308, 315, 326, 329, 359n, 361, 365–66, 389, 397
 Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, Royal (Stockholm), 85, 125–27, 193, 209–10, 408
 Academy of Science, Royal (Stockholm), 62, 125–27
 Acerbi, Giuseppe 1773–1846, 209
 Acre, 77, 79
 Adana, 71
 Adlerberg, Carl Gustaf 1763–1814, 130n
 Aegina sculptures, 372–75, 394
 Aḥmad Āghā al-Qarīmī, 129
 Aḥmad al-Jazzār 1720–1804, 77
 Ainslie, Robert 1729/30–1812, 109, 114
 Åkerblad, Anna Magdalena see Lenngren
 Åkerblad, Eric Emanuel 1766–, 19
 Åkerblad, Johan 1727–1799, 19, 103, 123, 203
 Åkerblad, Johanna Christina 1761–1824, 19, 192, 411
 Åkerblad, Timotheus 1768–, 19, 123
 Åkerström, Jonas 1759–1795, 328–29, 409–10, pls. 27, 35
 al-Azhar 83, 189
 al-Jabartī see Jabartī
 al-Ladhihiyah, 73
 Alaux, Jean 1785–1864, 402
 Albanian, 12, 170
 Albany see Stolberg
 Aleppo, 35, 40, 71–73, 78, 83, 111, 114
 Alexander I of Russia 1777–1825, 390
 Alexander the Great, 367
 Alexandria, 79–83, 86–88, 90, 99, 102, 104–7, 110, 188, 190, 219, 223, 255; treaty of, 223
 Alfieri, Vittorio 1749–1803, 298–99
 Ali Bey al-Abbasi see Badia y Leblich
Almānna Tidningar, 34, 35n
 Alquier, Charles-Jean-Marie 1752–1826, 292n
 Alxinger, Johann Baptist 1755–1797, 133n
 Amati, Girolamo 1768–1834, 333, 337, 357, 375
 Ameilhon, Hubert-Pascal 1730–1811, 241n
 Amiens, treaty of, 225–26, 245
 amir al-hājj, 80
Amphion, 130
 Andros, 69
 Anjala, 112
Annales encyclopédiques, 359n, 420
 Anquetil-Duperron, Abraham Hyacinthe 1731–1805, 205, 244
 Ansse de Villoison see Villoison
 Anṭākī, Dā‘ūd ibn ‘Umar, –1599, 77n
 Antiochia, 71
 antiquarianism, 96–97, 198, 315–19, 361, 405, 418
 Aqaba at Ma‘ān, 105
 Arabia Felix, expedition, 25, 148, 368
 Arabic, 2, 10, 12, 20–22, 28, 33, 62–63, 72, 76–78, 83–84, 101, 104, 111, 114, 133, 187–88, 191, 204, 223, 235, 240, 242, 245, 251, 254, 270–71, 311, 314, 352, 357, 358, 367, 393, 415–17
 Aramaic, 12, 20, 35, 95, 252, 356–57
 Arcadia, Academy of, 308, 328–31
 Aristippus, 300
 Armée d’Orient, l’, 222
 Armellini, Francesco, 391
 Armfelt, Gustaf Mauritz 1757–1814, 141
 Artaud de Montor, Alexis-François 1772–1849, 395
 Asp, Pehr Olof von 1745–1808, 55, 64, 132–37, 145–47, 149, 159, 161
 Assemani, Simone 1752–1820, 194, 219
 assignats, 155–56
 Athens, 44, 54, 67, 69, 97, 99, 102, 114, 168, 170–76, 195, 197, 199, 218, 341, 343, 347–50, 373
 Athos, 69
 Atterbom, Per Daniel Amadeus 1790–1855, 334n, 370, 407–9, 412
 Aurivillius, Carl 1717–1786, 20–23, 86, 204, 242

- Avellino, Francesco Maria 1788–1850, 331
 Avignon, 157
- Baalbek, 74
 Babylon, 111, 367–68
 Badia y Leblich, Domingo 1766–1818, 359
Badine, la, 28, 30
 Baghdad, 68
 Balsamaki see Valsamachi
- Barthélemy, Jean-Jacques 1716–1795, 95–97,
 123, 219, 231, 253
 Bast, Friedrich Jakob 1771–1811, 245n
 Batavian Republic, 155, 241
 Beauharnais, Joséphine de 1763–1814, 248
 Belgrade, 148–49
 Berggren, Jacob 1790–1868, 72n, 78–79,
 177–78
 Bergstedt, Erik 1760–1829, 33–34, 59–60,
 62, 82–83, 85, 102, 109, 137, 141–147, 209,
 246, 412, 414
 Berlin, 34, 47, 133, 312, 318, 351
 Bernadotte, Jean-Baptiste 1763–1844, 248
 Bernal, Martin 1937–, 271–72
Biblioteca italiana, 332, 339, 401n
 Bildungsreise, 62
 Bithynia, 68, 78
 Björnsthål, Jacob Jonas 1731–1779, 24, 26,
 32, 35, 37, 48, 50, 59, 62–63, 67, 86, 148
 Blacas, Pierre Louis Jean Casimir de
 1771–1839, 403, 411
 Blumauer, Alois 1755–1798, 133n
 Boissonade de Fontarabie, Jean François
 1774–1857, 245n
 Bonaparte, Élisabeth 1777–1820, 297–98
 Bonaparte, Louis 1778–1846, 406
 Bonaparte, Napoléon see Napoleon I
 Borgia, Stefano 1731–1804, 181, 183, 194, 201,
 225n, 243, 255, 259, 356, 370 378–79
 Bosco Parrasio, 328
 Bossi, Luigi 1758–1835, 197–98, 321–22, 340,
 371
 Böttiger, Karl August 1760–1835, 231n,
 378–79n
 Bouchard, Pierre 1771–1822, 221
 Bourchell, Anna Catharina 1734–1817, 124
 Bourdieu, Pierre 1930–2002, 413
 Brinkman, Carl Gustaf von 1764–1847,
 198
 British Museum, 171, 176, 193–94, 199, 224,
 227, 229, 334, 379
 Broers, Michael 1954–, 266, 297–98, 395
 Brøndsted, Peter Oluf 1780–1842, 345,
 347–48, pl. 31
 Brugsch, Heinrich 1827–1894, 267n, 276n
- Brun, Friederike 1765–1835, 201, 338, 356,
 378
 Burke, Edmund 1729–1797, 139
 Bursa, 68
 Byron, George Gordon, lord 1788–1824, 174,
 176, 401
 Byström, Niklas 1783–1848, 387–88, 390,
 395, 407–8
- Caesarea, 79
 Caffar, 101
 Cairo, 80–85, 88, 105, 109, 114, 189, 221,
 223–24, 360
 Callmer, Christian 1908–1985, 2–3, 91, 143,
 183, 204, 307–9, 363n, 408, 412
 Cambridge, 123, 225, 274
Cambridge Museum, 274, 278
 campanilismo, 325
 Campo Formio, treaty of, 179
 Cana, 79
 Cancellieri, Francesco 1751–1826, 104, 196,
 296, 316, 319–20, 389–91, 406
 Candidi Dionigi, Marianna 1756–1826, 305,
 320, 338
 Canova, Antonio 1757–1822, 196, 326,
 366–67, 369, 372, 389
 capitulations, 137
 Carleson, Eduard 1704–1767, 104
 Carmel, 79
 Carthage, 98–99, 102, 111, 114, 254
 Caspian Sea, 67
 Catullus, 364
 Çelebi, Evliya c. 1611–1682, 195
 Celsing, Gustaf 1723–1789, 23, 33
 Celsing, Ulric 1731–1805, 22–23, 33, 127–28,
 133–37
 Celsius, Anders 1701–1744, 21
 Çesme, 66
 Chalon, 156
 Champollion-Figeac, Jacques-Joseph
 1778–1867, 251–52, 256, 263
 Champollion, Jean-François 1790–1832, 2,
 216n, 228–30, 245, 251–264, 267–70, 272,
 275–87, 307, 322, 356, 358–59, 390, 416,
 419
 Chios, 66, 71, 170
 Choiseul-Gouffier, Marie-Gabriel-Florent-
 Auguste de 1752–1817, 44–48, 51, 54–59,
 65–66, 113–15, 168, 171, 173, 176
 Christina, 1626–1689, reign 1632–1654, 328
 Ciampi, Sebastiano 1769–1847, 306, 309–12,
 314–16, 318, 325, 328, 330–31, 333–37, 347,
 349, 357, 361, 371–72, 378–79, 382, 384,
 389, 393, 397, 401, 404

- Cicognara, Francesco Leopoldo 1767–1834, 366–67, 369
 Cockerell, Charles Robert 1788–1863, 372–73, 394
 Codrica see Kodrikas
 Collé, Charles 1709–1783, 56–57
 comité de demolition, 156
 Commission des sciences et des arts, Rome 183; Egypt, 186–87, 190, 224
 Consalvi, Ercole 1757–1824, 386, 395, 398–99, 401, 405
 Constantinople, 1, 7, 10–11, 21–23, 26, 30–71, 80–88, 107–8, 112–14, 127–52, 158–71, 185, 191–92, 201, 245, 352, 355, 376, 393, 413
 conversazioni, 338, 395
 Convoy Office, 64, 72, 91
 Copenhagen, 34, 47, 181, 196, 201, 203, 206, 211, 225n, 226, 379
 Coptic, 2, 9, 11–12, 13n, 82, 84, 94, 115, 181–84, 188–91, 201, 210, 216–21, 230–38, 242, 245, 251–61, 264, 268–71, 275, 278, 283–87, 295, 311n, 314, 352, 356–58, 414, 416, 419
 Coray see Korais
 Corsica, 382–83
Courier de l'Égypte, 189, 222
 Courier, Paul-Louis 1772–1825, 179–80, 187, 245, 296, 299–307, 311, 329–30, 336, 338, 365, 376
 Creuzer, George Friedrich 1771–1852, 272
 Crusades, 113–114, 157
 Crusca, Academy, 331
 curse tablets, 341–50, 360, 375, 396, 416
 Cuvier, Georges 1769–1832, 312
 Cyprus, 90–91, 96–97, 99, 204, 218
 d'Ohsson see Ohsson
 Damietta see Dumyat
 Danish, 205
 David, Jacques-Louis 1748–1825, 240
 Dedem van de Gelder, Frederik Gysbert 1743–1820, 147
 Dedem, Antoine Baudouin Gisbert de 1774–1825, 45n, 58n, 148–49
 Degerando see Gérando
 Delille, Jacques 1738–1813, 48
 Delos, 69
 Demotic, 2, 222, 225n, 226–41, 248–49, 252–53, 260–62, 274–78, 284–87, 349, 359, 405, 416
 Denis, Johann Michael 1729–1800, 133n
 Denon see Vivant
 Denouette, Sofia, 336–37
 Dervish, 74
 Devonshire, Elizabeth Cavendish, duchess of 1758–1824, 372–73, 394–406
 Devonshire, Georgiana Cavendish, duchess of 1757–1806, 394
Diario di Roma, 401
 Diderot, Denis 1713–1784, 26
 Dijon, 156
 Diospolis, 100
 Dodwell, Edward 1767–1832, 110, 171–72, 175, 295–96, 340, 342, 347, 368, 373n, 396–97, pls. 5, 14
 dragoman, 23, 33, 63, 133, 137, 149, 160
 Dresden, 47, 133
 Drummond, Alexander –1769, 40–41, 73–74
 Druze, 77
 Dumyat, 104–7
 Dutch, 12, 242–43
 Ebu Ratib Bekir, 163, 165
 Edirne (Andrinopoli), 148
 Egypt, 2, 5, 10, 24, 34, 62, 65, 68, 78, 80–90, 99, 100, 105–7, 111–15, 122, 125–26, 146, 162, 177, 182, 210, 215–88, 303, 311, 314, 345–46, 349–50, 359–60, 373–75
 Egypt, invasion of, 10, 106, 162, 184–190, 204, 221–26, 254, 267, 288, 303, 314, 417
Egyptienne, l', 223
 Egyptology, 5, 10–11, 189, 215–16, 227, 254, 264–73, 282, 358–60, 373, 412, 418–19
 Ehrenström, Johan Albrekt 1762–1847, 128–29, 143
 Ehrensward, Carl August 1749–1805, 241, 246n
 Eichhorn, Johann Gottfried 1752–1827, 93
 Eleusis, 170, 239
 Elgin, Thomas Bruce, earl of 1766–1841, 174–76, 372
 Emmaus, 79
 Eneman, Michael 1676–1714, 101
 Engeström, Lars von 1751–1826, 352–54
 Enghien, d', duke of 1772–1804, 246–47
 Enlightenment, 1, 42, 102, 158–59, 331n, 414
 Ephesus, 68, 71, 99, 102
 Estrup, Hector Frederik Janson 1794–1846, 181n, 408n
 Ethiopic, 12, 357–58
 Etruria, 199, 292, 322, 325
 Etruscan, 13, 323
 Etruscherie, 322–25
 Euripides, 296, 298–99, 314, 349
 Fabre, Francois Xavier 1766–1837, 298
 Fabrice, Gabriel c. 1725–1800, 219
 Famagusta, 90

- Fant, Eric Michael 1754–1817, 21
 Fauvel, Louis-François-Sébastien
 1753–1838, 54, 56, 171, 173–77, 373, 405
 Fea, Carlo 1753–1836, 363–65, 398, 401, 405
 Ferri de Saint-Constant, Giovanni
 1765–1830, 354–55
 Finelli, Carlo 1785–1853, 369
 Finland, 113–14, 127–29, 143, 188, 352, 409
 firmans, capitulations, 137
 Flaubert, Gustave 1821–1880, 264
 Florence, 179, 207, 209, 291–306, 310–12,
 318, 321, 329, 336–37, 339, 351, 353–56,
 358, 376, 378
 Fostat, 85
 Foster, Elizabeth see Devonshire
 Fouché, Joseph 1759–1820, 248
 Fourmont, Étienne 1683–1745, 20
 Franc, Ulric Gustaf 1736–1811, 231
 Francesconi, Daniele 1761–1835, 1911
 Fredenheim, Carl Fredric 1748–1803, 203–4,
 207, 361
 Freedom of Press (Sweden), 28, 122, 138–41,
 149
 Freedom Tree, 153, 182
 French Revolution, 11, 51–52, 132, 139–44,
 152–57, 162, 224, 281, 297–99, 413, 415
 Furia, Francesco del 1777–1856, 304–6, 310

 Gagneraux, Bénigne 1756–1795, 27, pl. 1
 Galilee, 79, 99
 Ganges, 88
 Garzoni, Agostino 1733–1818, 38
 Geijer, Erik Gustaf 1783–1847, 407
 Gell, William 1777–1836, 317, 359
Gentleman's magazine, 224, 226
 Georg-August University (Göttingen), 24
 Gérando, Joseph-Marie de 1772–1842, 301,
 311–13, 316, 326–27, 361, 363, 366
 Gérando, Marie-Anne de Rathsamhausen
 1774–1824, 334
 Gesenius, Wilhelm 1786–1842, 97–98
 Ghazi Hasan Pasha 1713–1790, 81, 85, 112,
 114
Giornale enciclopédico, 311, 331
Giornale politico del dipartimento di Roma,
 347
 Giza, 85, 88
 Gjörrwell, Carl Christoffer 1731–1811, 19, 26,
 28, 34–35, 38, 48, 52, 57, 63, 72, 87, 102,
 113, 121, 124, 143, 158–59
 Glyptothek, 372–73
 Godard, Luigi 1740–1824, 330
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von 1749–1832,
 195, 293
 Gordon, George see Byron
 Göttingen, 20, 24, 26, 122, 199–201, 226, 273,
 325, 331
*Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten
 Sachen*, 193
 Grabien, Joakim –1822, 192
 Grand Tour, 62, 64, 153, 180, 33411
 Grand Vizier, 30–31, 150, 166
 Grandel, Pehr 1746–1772, 22
 Gravier, Charles, comte de Vergennes
 1717–1778, 56
 Greek, Ancient, 2, 12–13, 20–21, 26, 93–99,
 127, 170–71, 193, 196–97, 199–200, 208,
 221, 225–27, 230, 233, 235, 245, 252, 269,
 299, 303, 307, 309–11, 324, 330, 340–50,
 352, 357, 359, 416; Modern, 10–11, 13, 33,
 35, 51, 69–70, 114, 133, 187, 375–77, 415
 Grill, Claes 1750–1816, 123–24
 Guattani, Giuseppe Antonio 1748–1830,
 35911, 379, 391, 398
 Guicciardini, Francesco 1483–1540, 302
 Guignes, Chrétien-Louis-Joseph de
 1759–1845, 244
 Gustav I, c. 1496–1560, reign 1523–60, 21
 Gustav III, 1746–1792, reign 1771–1792,
 26–27, 63, 112, 129, 132, 137–38, 142, 145,
 147, 153, 160, 203, 206–7, 211, 248, 296
 Gustav IV Adolf, 1778–1837, reign
 1792–1809, 147, 206, 211, 246, 248, 291

 Hague see The Hague
 Halil Hamid Pasha 1736–1785, 30–31
 Halle, 20
 Hamburg, 47, 152, 20111
 Hamilton, Alexander 1762–1824, 245
 Hartleben, Hermine 1846–1918, 262–63
 Hārūn al-Rashid c. 763–809, 367
 Hasan Pasha, see Ghazi
 Haschka, Lorenz Leopold 1749–1827, 13311
 Hasselquist, Fredric 1722–1752, 82
 Hauterive, Alexandre-Maurice Blanc-La-
 Naute d' 1754–1830, 48
 Hebrew, 2, 13, 20, 26, 48, 93, 19111, 315, 347,
 388, 415
 Heidenstam, Anna von, 55–58
 Heidenstam, Gerhard Johan Baltasar von
 1747–1803, 23, 28, 30–31, 33, 47, 54, 56 62,
 67–68, 71–72, 86, 112, 12711, 132, 149, 161
 Hellenocentrism, 9, 98–99, 271–73
 Hennin, Pierre Michel 1728–1807, 6011
 Herbert-Rathkeal, Peter Philipp von
 1735–1802, 3011
 Herodotus, 94, 96, 197, 302, 349
 Hervey see Elizabeth Devonshire

- Heyne, Christian Gottlob 1729–1812, 199, 225, 273
 Hilleström, Pehr 1732–1816, 208, pl. 18
 Hisarlık, 170
 Hochpied, 55
 Holland, 152–55, 241–43, 319, 406
 Horace, 361, 363–64, 403
 Hug, Johann Leonhard 1765–1846, 219
 Humboldt, Caroline von 1766–1829, 295, 312–14, 334, 338, 357, 370
 Humboldt, Wilhelm von 1767–1835, 198, 295, 312–14, 320, 351, 357
 Hungary, 134

 Ibn al-Wardī, –1348/9, 20, 242
 Ibn Asbāt, Ḥamzah ibn Aḥmad, –1520, 77n
 Ibn Ḥawqal, 10th cent., 242, 254
 Ibrahim Bey 1735–1817, 80–82, 85
 Imbros, 69, 193–94
 Indo-European (languages), 94–95, 170, 271–73
 Inghirami, Francesco 1772–1846, 321–22, 324–25
 inscription corpuses, 318
 Institut d'Égypte, 221
 Institut National, 188, 216, 224, 225n, 230, 243–44, 248, 255–57, 260, 285, 288, 301, 308, 325, 341n, 352, 376
 Ipsara, 87
 Isocrates, 376
 Istanbul, 11, see Constantinople
 Istituto Nazionale, 182
 Italinsky, Andriy 1743–1827, 393, 403

 Jabartī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 1753–1825, 80, 84–86, 189
 Jaffa, 99–100, 104–5, 191, 242
 Jaquin, Nikolaus Joseph 1727–1814, 133n
 Jerusalem, 68, 77, 79, 99–104, 114, 148
 Jeune de Langue, 22–23
 Josaphat, 104
Journal des Savans, 279
 Judea, 99
 Junot, Laure, duchess d'Abrantès 1784–1838, 339

 Kähre, Truls 1600–1672, 90n
 Kaiserlichkönigliche Akademie für Orientalische Sprachen (Vienna), 134
 Karl XIII, 1748–1818, reign 1809–1814, 138, 150
 Katharevousa, 376–77
 Kauffer, François 1751–1801, 54
 Kauffmann, Angelica 1741–1807, 153, pl. 10

 Kition, 91–93, 108, 219
 Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb 1724–1803, 122
 Knös, Gustaf 1773–1828, 240, 245, 288
 Kodrikas, Panagiotēs 1760–1827, 376–77
 Kohlrausch, Heinrich 1780–1826, 312
 Königliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften (Göttingen), 199–201, 325, 331
 Konya, 71
 Korais, Adamantios 1748–1833, 123, 376–77
 Kos, 87
 Kungliga Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien see Academy of Letters
 Kurdish, 13

 La Croze-Veyssiere, Mathurin 1661–1739, 283
 Lagerswärd, Johan Claes 1756–1836, 207, 292, 336, 351–55, 408–9, 411
 Langlès, Louis-Mathieu 1763–1824, 245
 Lanzi, Luigi 1732–1810, 322, 324, 419
 Larnaca, 90–91, 99
 Latakia, 73
 Latin, 127; debate on its role as lingua franca, 205–6
 Lebanon, 74–77, 99
 Lechevalier, Jean-Baptiste 1752–1836, 34n, 169, 173, 177n, 209
 Leclant, Jean 1920–2011, 282
 Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm 1646–1716, 253
 Leiden, 20, 225n, 242–43, 254
 Leipzig, 133
 Lenngren, Anna Magdalena 1732–1776, 19, 103
 Lenz, Carl Gotthold 1763–1809, 173
 Leopardi, Giacomo 1798–1837, 103–4, 319–20
 Lesbos, 87
 Lidzbarski, Mark 1868–1928, 97
 Limasol, 90
 Lisbon, 225n
 Livorno 26, 28, 159, 190–94, 293, 301, 321, 333, 384, 411
 Loeiza, 76
 Longus, 301–6, 329
 London, 47, 83, 87–88, 122–23, 128, 133, 146–47, 159, 176, 190, 223–29, 273, 275–77, 294, 314, 331
 Louis XVI, 1754–1793 reign 1774–1792, 140, 144–45
 Louis XVIII, 1755–1824 reign 1814–1815, 1815–1824, 263
 Löwenhielm, Carl Axel 1772–1861, 33n

- Löwenhielm, Carl Gustaf 1790–1858, 124, pl. 6
 Löwenhielm, Gustaf Carl Fredrik 1771–1856, 124, 241n, 378n
 Lucian of Samosata, 344
 Lüdeke, Christoph Wilhelm 1737–1805, 34
 Ludwig I of Bavaria 1786–1868, 372
 Lund University, 352
 Lyon, 156–57
- Machiavelli, Niccolò 1469–1527, 302
 Madrid, 47, 225n
Magasin encyclopédique, 196, 210, 217, 219–20, 230, 239–40, 258, 264, 279–80, 389, 420
 Marbot, Andrew 1801–1830, 413
 Marcel, Jean Joseph 1776–1854, 224
 Marciana library, 50, 194
 Marcus Aurelius Antoninus (Caracalla), 76
 Marforio, 383
 Maria Theresa of Austria 1717–1780, 134
 Marie-Antoinette 1755–1793, 145
 Marly, 155
 Marquez, Pedro Jose 1741–1820, 358
 Marseille, 60, 119–22, 125, 155–59
 Masdeu, Juan Francisco 1744–1817, 365
 Maseyk, Jan van –1826, 72
 Matveyev, Fyodor 1758–1826, 366
 Megara, 170
 Melling, Antoine Ignace 1763–1831, 136
 Memphis, 85, 99, 102, 111, 114; decree of, 222
 Micali, Giuseppe 1769–1844, 321–22, 324–25, 419
 Michaelis, Christian Benedikt 1680–1764, 20
 Michaelis, Johann David 1717–1791, 20–21, 24–26, 28, 41, 122, 204
 Milan, 294, 331–32, 339, 365, 401
 Millin de Grandmaison, Aubin-Louis 1759–1818, 196, 219, 231, 279–80, 385, 389–91, 395n, 396, 406, 420
 Millingen, James 1774–1843, 336, 379–80, 390
 Milton, John 1608–1674, 122
 Miollis, Alexandre de 1759–1828, 384
 Miranda, Francisco de 1750–1816, 121
 Monge, Gaspard 1746–1818, 186–88, 221
Moniteur universel, 140, 237, 239–40, 247–48, 261
 Monnier de Courtois, Joseph Gabriel 1745–1818, 57n
 Montansier, Théâtre, 57, 244
 Moravian church, 19, 102–3
 Morgan, Sydney Lady bap. 1783–1859, 403
 Mouradgea see Ohsson
 Moustoxydes, Andreas 1785–1860, 376
 Münter, Friedrich 1761–1830, 201–6, 211, 216, 219, 223, 226–27, 230–31, 243, 280, 378–79
 Murad Bey 1750–1801, 80–82, 85–86
 Murat, Caroline 1782–1839, 385
 Murat, Joachim 1767–1815, 384–86
 Museum, Royal (Stockholm) 207–8, 351
 Mycenae, 179, 396
 Mykonos, 69, 170
 Mysia, 71
- Nadir Shah 1688–1747, 67
 Naples, 167, 180, 300, 331, 351, 359–60, 384–86
 Napoleon I, 1769–1821, 77, 179, 187–89, 222–23, 241, 245–248, 263, 279, 281, 297–98, 300–1, 326–27, 339, 366–70, 381–84, 390, 395, 409
 Napoleon II see Re di Roma
 Napoleon III, 76
 Napoleonic Wars, 64, 89, 192, 199, 226, 241, 245–49, 266, 287, 292–96, 299, 303–4, 327, 338, 363, 371, 385–89, 395, 414
 Naxos, 69–70
 Necker see Staël
 Nibby, Antonio 1792–1839, 391
 Nicosia, 90
 Niebuhr, Barthold Georg 1776–1831, 310, 318
 Niebuhr, Carsten 1733–1815, 25, 148, 266, 368–69
 Nile, 81–82, 85, 88, 105; Delta 105–7, 189, 221–22, 255
 nobility, importance of/view on by Åkerblad, 141–43, 156, 403; by Champollion, 279
 Nolcken, Gustaf Adam 1733–1813, 146
 Norvins, Jacques Marquet de Montbreton 1769–1854, 382
 numismatics, 96, 201, 203–4
- Ohsson, Abraham Constantin Mouradgea d' 1779–1851, 161n, 245
 Ohsson, Ignatius Mouradgea d' 1740–1807, 143, 149, 159–68, 245, 352, 354, 414
 Olympus, 68
 orientalism, debate on, 6–9, 215, 264–73, 282, 297–98, 417
 orientology, 7
 Ottoman decline, myth of, 83–84, 90
 Ouseley, William 1769–1842, 201n, 242n
 Oxford, 123, 204, 225

- Padua, 194, 219
 Paestum, 180
 Paine, Thomas 1737–1809, 139
 Palestine, 71, 99
 Palin, Nils Gustaf 1765–1842, 142, 169, 284–85
 Palmyra, 68, 74
 Palmyrene alphabet, 95, 253
 Paolino, Jean Philippe Bartolomeo Weszdin 1748–1806, 244
 Papal States, 180, 199, 208, 297, 308, 351, 386, 389–90
 Paris, 2, 7, 11–12, 20, 47, 57, 71, 83, 87, 94–95, 109, 121–23, 132–33, 140, 142, 144–47, 152–57, 165, 171, 180, 183, 187, 190–96, 205–5, 210–11, 215–26, 230–60, 274, 279, 281, 286–88, 291–98, 301, 308, 312, 314, 325, 331, 338–39, 352–53, 357, 363, 370, 376, 387, 389–91, 393, 395, 405–6, 414
 Paros, 69
 Parthenon, 175–76, 344, 368–69, 372
 Pasch, Lorens the younger 1733–1805, 160, pl. 7
 Pasquino, 383
 patere, 174, 322n
 Pausanias, 316
 Pavia, 294
 Pelasgians, 197–98, 322, 371
 Pentini, Francesco 1797–1869, 411
 Pentini, Ulisse –1820, 13, 141, 292, 335, 353–54, 406, 408–11
 Persepolis, 368–69
 Persian, 2, 13, 67n, 72, 78, 191–92, 242n, 368, 411n
 Pezzana, Angelo 1772–1862, 303n
 Philadelphia, 225n
 Phoenicia/Phoenician, 2, 9, 13, 65n, 91–99, 111, 123, 125, 171, 199–200, 203–4, 209, 216–219, 253–54, 307, 315, 346–49, 359, 393, 416, 420
 Piehl, Karl 1853–1904, 411
 Pieri, Mario 1776–1852, 335, 375
 Pinelli, Bartolomeo 1781–1835, 410
 Piraeus, 175, 195, 347, pls. 28, 29
 Piranesi, family, 295
 Pisa, 37, 292, 294, 310, 312, 384
 Pius VI, 1717–1799, 27, 194
 Pius VII, 1742–1823, 179, 308–9, 384, 386, 388–91, 394, 401
 plague, 31, 59–61, 71–73, 78–79, 81, 90, 99, 148–49
 Plovdiv (Philippopoli), 148
 Plutarch, 302, 306
 Pococke, Richard 1704–1765, 91–93, 204
 Poland, 112, 393
 Polybius, 111
 Pomardi, Simone 1760–1830, 175, 396, pls. 28, 29
 Pomègues, 119
 Pondicherry, 89
 Poniatowski, Stanisław 1754–1833, 392–93
 Porter, James 1720–1786, 136
 Porto Sigri, 87
 Pougens, Charles de 1755–1833, 240
 Propaganda Fide, 28–29, 181, 183, 187–88, 217, 225n, 296, 314, 356
 Prussia, 112–13, 133, 312, 318, 351, 388
 Puccini, Tommaso 1749–1811, 363n
 quarantine, 60, 119, 121, 125, 148–49
Quarterly Review, 332
 Quatremère, Etienne de 1782–1857, 98n, 251–64, 270, 278, 279n, 281, 284
 Quazdağlı, 80
 Rashid (Rosetta), 82, 221–22
 Rauch, Christian Daniel 1777–1867, 328n
 Raynal, Guillaume Thomas 1713–1796, 119–22, 157
 Re di Roma (Napoleon II), 381–83
 Re, Lorenzo –1820, 391
 Recanati, 319–20
 Regensburg, 47
 Reinhart, Johann Christian 1761–1847, 337–38, 366
 Renan, Ernest 1823–1892, 98
 Repubblica Romana see Roman Republic
 Reuterholm, Gustaf Adolf 1756–1813, 138, 150–58, 211
 Revolutionary Wars, 64, 152, 179, 205–6, 217, 223, 225, 226–27
 Rhodes, 65, 99, 102, 161
 Riedesel, Johann Hermann von 1740–1785, 65
 Roman Republic, 179–183, 190, 193, 341n
 Rome, 7, 11, 13, 26–29, 58, 99, 102, 114, 141, 153, 165, 177, 179–201, 206–10, 217, 220–21, 225, 243, 251, 254–59, 262–63, 275, 288, 291–412, 417
 Rööck, Lars Jacob von 1778–1867, 176n, 240
 Rosenhane, Schering 1754–1812, 150, 162–68, 185, 191
 Rosenstein, Nils Rosén von 1752–1824, 82n
 Rosetta Stone, 2, 9–11, 82, 194, 209–10, 215–63, 274–78, 281–88, 303, 358, 360, 405, 414–16
 Rosini, Giovanni 1776–1855, 311n

- Rossini, Luigi 1790–1857, 387
 Rostock, 150
 Rousseau Jean-Jacques 1712–1778, 26
 runes, 194–98, 316, 322, 371
 Russia, 2, 7, 9, 30–31, 46–47, 66–67, 104–6, 111–14, 121, 124, 127–132, 138, 161–63, 173, 177, 191n, 192, 219n, 263, 266, 286, 311, 331, 338, 357, 366, 383–94, 403, 413–14
 Russo-Swedish War 1788–90, 2, 9, 111–14, 123–24, 127–32, 138, 143, 188
 Russo-Turkish War 1768–74, 30, 66, 148, 414
 Russo-Turkish War 1787–92, 86, 104–6, 112, 148, 414

 Sacy, Antoine-Isaac Silvestre de 1758–1838, 109–10, 123, 188, 205, 216–84, 287, 295–96, 314, 322, 357–58, 390, 403n, 405–6, 420
 Said, Edward 1935–2003, 6–7, 265–72, 297–98, 417
 Saint Petersburg, 34, 47, 225n, 331
 Saint-Martin, Jean-Antoine 1791–1832, 257n, 262n, 279n
 Salt, Henry 1780–1827, 360
 Samaria, 79, 99
 Samaritan, 105, 191–92, 242, 315
 Samos, 71, 99, 102
 San Luca, academy of, 308, 365–66
 Saqqara, 85
 Sardes, 71, 99, 102
 Sassanids, 79
 Scala Nova, 71
 Schick, Christian Gottlieb 1776–1812, 334
 Schindler, Thomas –1782, 22, 86
 Schlegel, August Wilhelm von 1767–1845, 197
 Schlegel, Friedrich von 1772–1829, 94, 245, 272
 Schliemann, Heinrich 1822–1890, 170
 Schlözer, August Ludwig von 1735–1809, 92
 Schmidt, Frederik 1771–1840, 408n
 Schultens, Albert 1686–1750, 20
 Schwab, Raymond 1884–1956, 267–69
 Scio, 68
 Scuria, Herbert 1905–1981, 266–67
Séduisant, le, 52
 Selim III, reign 1789–1807, 1761–1808, 135, 147, 149, 161
 Semitic, 92–99, 125, 271–72, 415
 Sestini, Domenico 1750–1832, 37–43, 64, 107, 109
 shaykh al-balad, 80

 Sicily, 180, 204
 Sierakowski, Józef 1765–1831, 379
 Sigeion, 114n
 Silfverhielm, Göran 1759–1808, 228n
 Sillén, Gustaf af 1762–1825, 180, 362, pl. 15
 Skyros, 69
 Smyrna, 26, 28, 60, 68–69, 71, 82, 86, 159–60, 376
 Smythe, Percy, viscount Strangford 1780–1855, 193
 Society of Antiquaries of London (SAL) 224–29, 232, 235, 273, 283
 Society, Royal (London) 228–29, 273, 275, 331
 Socrates, 167, 300
 Sofia, 148
 Sonnenfels, Franz Anton 1735–1806, 133n
 Spain, 47, 157, 204, 225n, 342, 381, 395
 Sparre, Fredrik 1731–1803, 150–52, 166, 168, 207, 211
 Spencer see Georgiana Devonshire
 Staël von Holstein, Anne-Louise-Germaine, 1766–1817, 58, 123, 197, 338–40
 Staël von Holstein, Erik Magnus 1749–1802, 123, 144
 stato delle anime, 141n
 Störck, Anton 1731–1803, 133n
 Stuart, James 1713–1788, 172, pl. 13
 Sturzenbecker, Adolf Fredrik 1757–1784, 68, 86
 subsidies (to Sweden), 30, 46, 112, 127, 132, 161, 163
 Suchtelen, Jan Pieter van 1751–1836, 192–93, 357
 Swartz, Olof 1760–1818, 22, 51–52, 138, 141, 143, 155, 246
 Swieten, Gottfried van 1734–1803, 134
 Swinton, John 1703–1777, 219
 Switzerland, 291, 339
 Syria, 24, 71, 77, 81, 90, 95, 98, 114, 122, 204
 Syriac, 13, 20, 77, 187
 Syros, 69

 Tabor, 79
 Tacitus, 138
 ta'în, 148
 Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de 1754–1838, 248, 395
 Tanis, 105
 Tasso, Torquato 1544–1595, 157
 Tatar, 13, 129, 191–92
 Tekirdağ, 87
 Tersan, Charles-Philippe Campion de 1736–1819, 252

- Testa, Gian Domenico 1747–1832, 382–83, 388–89
 The Hague, 47, 185n, 210, 227, 240–44, 286
 Thebes, 170
 Theseion, 180, 368, 373
 Thorild, Thomas 1759–1808, 121–22, 139–41
 Thorvaldsen, Bertel 1770–1844, 181–82, 262, 313, 366–72, 394, 409, pls. 32, 33
 Thunberg, Carl Peter 1743–1828, 246
 Timpanaro, Sebastiano 1923–2000, 310
 Tinos, 69
 Toderini, Giambattista 1728–1799, 37–43, 419
 Tondou, Achille 1760–1787, 68n
 Tournon, Camille de 1778–1833, 327, 361–63, 365
 Tripoli (Libya), 111
 Tripolis (Lebanon), 74, 77
 Troy (Troad), 69, 99, 102, 115, 148, 169–70, 173, 176–77, 209, pl. 12
 Tsakonian, 170–71
 Tunis, 87, 110–11, 113, 119, 130, 245
 Turin, 291, 294
 Turkish, 2, 9, 10, 13, 20–23, 32–33, 38–39, 45, 62–63, 72, 78, 86, 101, 114, 128–35, 150, 187, 191–92, 357, 416–17
 Turner, Hilgrove 1764–1843, 223
 Tuscany, 40, 179, 199, 292, 297, 300, 308, 325, 339
 Tychsen, Oluf Gerhard 1734–1815, 150, 201, 219, 227, 239, 266

 Uggeri, Angelo 1754–1837, 379
Upfostrings-Sällskapet Tidningar, 34
 Uppsala, 19–22, 28, 34, 63, 408, 412
 Utica, 111

 Valenciennes, 155
 Valsamaki, Demos 1789–1870, 376
 Vatican library, museum, 12, 27, 180, 295, 375, 394, 411
 Velletri, 181, 378–79
 Venice, 50, 194–99, 239, 316, 322, 326, 340
 Vermiglioli, Giovanni Battista 1769–1848, 322n
 Verri, Alessandro 1741–1816, 330–31
 Verri, Pietro 1728–1797, 331
Vetusta Monumenta, 225, 226n
 Via Sacra, 361, 398
 Vienna, 36, 47, 133–34, 138, 149, 165, 168, 225n, 378; Congress 385–86, 390
 Villa dei Papiri, 385

 Villers, Charles-François-Dominique de 1765–1815, 202n
 Villoison, Jean-Baptiste Gaspard d'Ansse de 1750/53–1805, 36, 48, 50–51, 60, 65, 69–71, 109, 122–23, 171, 173, 197, 237, 239–40, 243–45, 376
 Virgil, 48, 139, 363, 396, 399, 403–5
 Visconti, Alessandro –1834, 319
 Visconti, Ennio Quirino 1751–1818, 27, 341
 Visconti, Filippo Aurelio 1754–1831, 27, 378–79, 394, 398
 Vivant Denon, Dominique 1747–1825, 245
 Volney, Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf 1757–1820, 41
 Voltaire, 1694–1778, 26
 Volterra, 322

 Wadi al-Natrun, 219
 Wahlström, Pehr 1776–1854, 334n
 Wallachia, 48, 134
 war of antiquities, 174–78
 War of the Austrian Succession, 67
 Warsaw, 47, 310, 393
 Water, Jona Willem te 1740–1822, 242n
 Welcker, Friedrich Gottlieb 1784–1868, 295, 312, 334n, 357n
 Weszdin see Paolino
 Wicar, Jean-Baptiste 1762–1834, 183, 366
 Wieland, Christoph Martin 1733–1813, 36
 Wimmel, Carl Ludwig 1786–1845, 342, pl. 30
 Winckelmann, Johann Joachim 1717–1768, 65, 180, 373
 Winckler, Gottlieb F. 1771–1807, 241n
 Wolf, Friedrich August 1759–1824, 50
 Wolff, Joseph 1795–1862, 104n, 388
 Wyttenbach, Daniel Albert 1746–1820, 193n, 243

 Young, Thomas 1773–1829, 229, 232, 253, 262–64, 273–87, 322, 360

 Zakyntos, 179
 Zannoni, Gian Battista 1774–1832, 318, 321
 Zemun (Zemlin), 149
 Ziegler, Werner Karl Ludwig 1763–1809, 243n
 Zoëga, Georg 1755–1809, 181–83, 243, 255, 259, 293, 295, 313–14, 378, 409, 419

 Åkerblad see Akerblad
 Åkerström see Akerström